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LIFE OF

THIRU GNANA SAMBAN

S. SABARATNA MUDALIAR

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LIFE OF

THIRU GNANA SAMBANTHAR

(Translated from Periyapuranam with Notes and Introduction)

BY

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MADRAS

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PREFACE

SAMBANTHAR was a historic persona
character. Mythology belongs to the pre-
subject of the *Puranas*. History is the subj
Ramayana and *Bharata*. *Siva Rahasya* is
as *Paramethihasa*, and the lives of Samb
saints are recorded in it. The record made
been enlarged by Upamanyar and Agasti
vilasas. Their enlargement, and the ori
and they cannot be of much use to th
greatly indebted to Sekkilar for his excellent work known as *P*
puranam or *Thiruttondar Puranam* in which the lives of sixtythree canonized Tamil saints are described in a masterly manner, both as regards literary merit and spiritual depth.

Periyapuranam, however, is not the first work in Tamil on the subject. *Sundarar*, the last of the Saiva saints mentioned in the *Periyapuranam*, and the fourth of the religious preceptors (*Samaya-kuravars*) belonging to the mediaeval period, has given us a galaxy of the names of these saints in his *Thiruttondattokai*, and Nambiandar Nambi has given us a summary of their lives in his *Thiruttondar Thiruvanthathi*. It was left to Sekkilar, to give a fuller description of their lives, following the order adopted by Sundarar and Nambi-andar Nambi. Sekkilar, however, does not omit to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Sanskrit work of Upamanyar. Says he, in the opening section of his work:—

> என்றுமாமுனிவன் றொண்டர்செய் கையை
> அன்றுசொன்ன படியாலடி யவர்
> துன்றுசீர்த் திருத்தொண்டத் தொகைவிரி
> இன்றெனக்காவா விங்கியம்புகேன்.

Of the sixtythree saints whose lives are narrated in the *Periya-puranam*, Sambanthar, of course, stands foremost, about a third of the whole *Puranam* being devoted to the description of his life. He was not only a saint, but he was a great Teacher and a spiritual preceptor. He was a born poet and a perfect master of the musical

me a prodigy and a miracle-maker of an
ble to extemporize verses when he was
a consummate master of the *Vedic* and
was not given any education by any
ith a series of miracles of which I was
thin the short period of the thirteen
As has been well said, his life begins
iracle. He is reputed to have extem-
or one hundred and sixty thousand
thin the short span of his life; and
eptional character. Although we
undred and seventy seven of these hymns,
rare merit, not only in a literary point of view, but in their musical vibrations and rhetorical force, and in their exposition of the mysteries of the spiritual region, would certainly perplex any ordinary man.

A critical study of these miracles and the other incidents of the life would be highly instructive ... religious students, and it is very unfortunate that the late Srilasri Ar... Navalar of Jaffna who took upon himself to explain the various inci... lives of the saints mentioned in the *Periyapuranam* did not live long to complete his *Periyapurana Susanam.* His *Susanam* was only completed up to the life of Karaikkal Ammayar. If he had been spared his life a few years more, he would have completed his valuable work and opened the eyes of the public to th... ritual lore that underlies Sampanthar's life.

SAMBANT... R'S TIME

Sambanthar was born at a time when the influence of Jainism and Buddhism was strongly felt in South India. His advent was very opportune and he may be said to have given a fatal blow to these heresies. It must, however, be observed that Jainism and Buddhism seem to have prevailed in India from time to time at different intervals. Even according to the Buddhist canon, Gautama Buddha was the twentyfirst in the line of the Buddhas who appeared in India. This very probably accounts for the fact that Buddhism suffered not only at the hands of Sambanthar, but by Manickavasakar

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and Sankara also. The *Saiva Si*... of Buddhism which seem to diffe... of the present day. It is not, therefo... amount of certainty whether Samban... Gautama Buddha. But there can be no dou... born at a time when Buddhism and Jainism we... extent in South India and that his advent prov... the cause of those religions. Although these reli... exercised great influence at that time, Saivaism cann... been without its spiritual soul, at about this time. ... there were several Saiva Saints who graced South ... period, nine of the canonized saints mentioned in the ... having been contemporaries of Sambanthar, viz., Thirunavu... Siruttondar, M...ugar, Kungilyakkalayar, Thirunilanakkar, ...u-nilakandayalpanar, Nedumaran, Mankayarkkarasy and Kulachchirayar. This period must, therefore, be said to have been a highly favoured one—perhaps a providential arrangement to counteract the evil influence of alien creeds.

Several attempts have been made to fix the time of Gnanasambanthar in the light of historical science, and these attempts cannot all be said to be free from prejudice. Dr. Taylor placed Sambanthar at 1320 B.C., while Dr. Caldwell placed him at 1292 A.D. The tendency of modern historical spirit seems to be very much inclined to cut short the ages of Indian antiquities, and I should think that this spirit is mainly attributable to the Christian hypothesis upon which scientific enquiries are based. According to Christian theory, man was created but six thousand years ago, and although this theory has been exploded by modern science, the spirit begotten by the acceptance of that theory at one time still remains, and modern *Savants*, particularly Christians, are very much loth to accede anything like long antiquity to any Hindu activity. Dr. Caldwell was a Christian Missionary, and although he has rendered some service to the Tamil literature, still he cannot be said to have been free from his Christian prejudice. The late Prof. Sundaram Pillai of Travancore has convincingly proved in his paper on the "Age of Thirugnanasambanthar*" that Dr. Caldwell was greivously wrong, and has

* See Indian Antiquary of June 1896.

. Sambanthar's time could not be tury of the Christian era, although he upper limit of the saint's time. It und Pillai's paper that it was mainly ry of L. ldwell, and we cannot, therefore, rials enoug fix exactly the age of Sam- lusion of his pa however, he makes mention a postscript wit object of throwing some s the upper limi f—the suggestion being that ld be placed ixth century. But the facts cannot be as conclusive evidence on the place, t' mple known as *Thirumerrali* or *rrali*, he likes it, having been built by the Pallava Raja Singa about .D., and Sambantha having composed ara hymn in pra the presiding deity of the temple, Mr. Sundaram Pillai thin' that the age of Sambanthar should be placed between 550 and 700 A.D. I do not think the inference is quite correct. Temples are repaired or wholly rebuilt from time to time by kings and philanthropists, and the building of *Thirumerrali* by Raja Singa will not go to show that the temple had not been in existence before the time of Raja Singa. We know that the famous temple at Chidambaram was built and rebuilt from time to time by kings and others devoted to Siva.

The other suggestion p orward by Mr. Sundaram Pillai is about Siruttondar who was a co orary of Sambanthar. Mention having been made in the *Periy anam* of the battle fought by Siruttondar for the conquest of Va i, (a town that was wrested from the Pallavas and made a Chalukya capital by Pulikesan I, according to Dr. Fleet), and it being recorded in two Pallava documents that Narasingavarman I defeated the Chalukya king, Pulikesan and destroyed his capital Vatapi, Mr. Sundaram Pillai thinks with Dr. Hultszch, that the latter Pulikesan must have been Pulikesan II who reigned about 532 A.D. (according to certain inscriptions) and that the battle in which he was defeated must have been the one in which Siruttondar figured. It does not matter much whether the Chalukya king defeated by Narasingavarman I was Pulikesan I or II; but what

is there to prove that Siruttondar served under N[...]avarman? There is nothing to show that there was but one battle fought for *Vatapi*. It was a bone of contention between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas for a long time, and it is not possible to maintain that the battle fought by Narasingavarman was the only one of its kind for the conquest of *Vatapi*. This evidence cannot, therefore, serve our purpose, and we want definite proofs to fix the upper limit of the age of Sambanthar.

Mr. Sundaram Pillai has, however, adduced definite proofs in support of the lower limit fixed by him and, in one of them, he refers to the allusion made to Sambanthar by Sankaracharya who lived about the eighth century of the Christian era according to some, and about the sixth century according to others. But according to a Jain work called "Jaina Vijayam" Sankara was born in the twenty-first year of *Yudistra Sakkara i.e.* 752 B.C. This may not be pleasing to many modern scientists, but here is a record of an alien creed which cannot be rejected summarily.

Reference was made to Sambanthar not only by Sankaracharyar but by Kachchiappa Sivacharyar also in his *Kanda Puranam*, which according to an old saying, the correctness of which we have no reason to doubt, was submitted for the approval of Pandits in the *Saka* year 700 corresponding to the Christian period 777.

"ஏதமறு சகாத்த மெழுநூற்றின் மேலா
யிலகு கந்த புராண மரங்கேற்றி னனே."

It may also be pointed out in this connection that Athivira Rama Pandya, the author of *Kasikandam* who is said to have ruled over the Pandian territory during the eighth century of the Christian era, according to an ancient inscription, refers to Sambanthar in his book, and Sambanthar seems to have been a very antique saint at the time of this king. It is, therefore, absurd to locate Sambanthar after the eighth century of the Christian era, especially so, when the general belief among the Saivites is that he belongs to the opening of the *kali* era.

The safest way of deciding the age of Sambanthar is by determining the period during which certain kings ruled over the Chera Chola and Pandian kingdoms. Anapaya Chola was a contemporary of Sekkilar, the author of *Periyapuranam*, and Apayakulu Chola was a contemporary of Nambiandar Nambi, the author of *Thiruttondar Thiruvanthathi*. Cheraman Perumal was a contemporary of Sundarar and Kunpandyan or Mudattirumaran was a contemporary of Sambanthar. If we can fix the dates of these kings, we can safely say, when Sambanthar lived and when references were made to him by later writers.

Apayakula Chola is now identified with Raja Raja of the tenth century and according to *Thirumuraikandapuranam*, Sambanthar and the other *Samayacharias* including Sundarar were objects of worship from a long time back at the time of Apayakula Chola who caused the images of these saints taken in procession when the Brahmin priests of the Chidambaram temple refused to open the room in which the Devara hymn books were kept, and when they gave it as an excuse that they could only open the door if the saints themselves appear personally. The Devarams were then very very old, not a single copy of the same having been available elsewhere. It is possible to make some guess of the time that should have lapsed between the period when the *Devarams* were hymned and when they were discovered subsequently.

Sundarar was a contemporary of Cheraman Perumal who is supposed to belong to the fifth century of the Christian era, according to the *Cholapurapattayam* referred to by Mr. Simon Casie Chetty of Ceylon in his *Tamil Plutarch*. We have reason to believe that this Cheraman Perumal is identical with the Cheraman Venko referred to in *Purananuru*, and that his predecessor Senkotporayan was the same person as the Mantharancheral Irumporai referred to in the same work. He fought a battle with the Chola king, Perumatkilli who was a great friend of the Pandian Ukkirapperuvaluthi, the last king that presided over the third *Madura Sangam*. Madura was conquered by the Muhammadans during the time of Parakkirama Pandiyan eight hundred years ago, and there were fortyfour Pandyans who bore rule between Ukkirapperuvaluti and Parakkirama Pandyan. Even supposing that each king ruled for an average of 25 years, the gap between

these two sovereigns would cover a period of 1,100 years. If this is added to the eight hundred years above mentioned, we have 1900 years for the time when the third *Madura Sangam* was dissolved during the reign of Ukkirapperuvaluthi—and this is the time that should be assigned to Sundarar.

I will now come to Kunpandya or Mudattirumaran who was a contemporary of Sambanthar. Mudattirumaran was the first king that presided over the third Madura Sangam. (*பருங்கடைச்சங்க மிருந்தோர்..........இடர்ப்படாதிவர்களைச் சங்க மிரீஇயினோர். முடத்திரு மாறன் முதலா வுக்கிரப் பெருவழுதி யீறாப்பிறங்கு பாண்டியர்கள்*) and this *sangam* is said to have lasted for 1950 years. ("*எண்ணூற்றுக்கேள்விய ரிருந்த தாயிரத்துத் தொளாயிரத்தைம்பது வருட மென்ப.*") Add to this the 1900 years that have lapsed since the dissolution of the third sangam, and we have 3850 years for the time of Mudattirumaran and this is the time that should be assigned to Sambanthar. There is no reason to reject the evidence of the *agavals* from which the above extracts were made, and if we accept their evidence, Sambanthar must be said to have lived at the commencement of the third *Madura sangam* and Sundarar at the close of it. The *Isaittamil* beauties displayed by Sambanthar in his hymns strongly incline one to believe that he lived close upon the closing of the second *Mudura sangam* which paid great attention to *Isaittamil*.

If Sambanthar lived before the dissolution of the third sangam, the question remains to be answered as to why the poets of that sangam failed to make any reference to him or to his sacred hymns. It is not very difficult to answer this question. The general attitude of the third *sangam* was more or less of a secular nature and the sangam very probably wanted to be neutral in matters affecting religion —and this is apparent from the various works of the poets of that *Sangam* not excluding the immortal *Thirukural*. We could also see that in the collections made by this Sangam religious works are carefully avoided even if they were productions of the Sangam poets, as for instance the works of Nakkirar, Kapilar, Paraner etc., that are found embodied in the eleventh Saiva Thirumurai. The omission therefore on the part of the poets of the third sangam to refer to Sambanthar, cannot be said to be in any way inimical to the inference that Sambanthar lived at the commencement of the third sangam.

I must not omit to point out in this connection what is alleged to be an astronomical fact that will help us in determining the age of Sambanthar. In one of his hymns known as *Kolarupathigam* he invites the grace of God to counteract the evil influence of the constellations (*Nakshattras*) in whose days it is bad to undertake a journey. These are twelve in number and their names are given in Hindu astrological works. Sambanthar refers to these constellations by the ordinal number of the positions they occupied at that time in the zodiac. It is clear from his reference that at that time the constellation *Krittikai* (Tauri alcione) was holding the first position (*Thuruvam*), while at present the constellation that occupies the *Thuruvam* on the first position is *Uttirattai* (*L. Pegasi*) *i.e.*, the fourth constellation from *Krithikai.* According to an astronomical rule it takes 988 years and four months for a constellation to change its position in the *Thuruvam.* *Uttirattai* came to this position about 500 years ago and it is not known how many years had lapsed since *Krittika* commenced to occupy that position when Sambanthar hymned his *Kolarupathigm.* At any rate, it is clear that 3 × 988⅓ + 500 or 3455 years have lapsed, even granting that Sambanthar hymned his *Thevaram* at the very end of Krittikai's occupancy of the *Thuruvam.* That is to say that according to this calculation, Sambanthar should be assigned B. C. 1465–and this favours the theory of Dr. Taylor and also the evidence of the *agavals* above referred to *.

Assigning such a long age to Sambanthar may not be agreeable to the fancy of a certain section of modern scientists, because their theories are based on the presumption that Indian civilization cannot go beyond the Christian era. Even facts that are unassailable in themselves are rejected by them if they are not favourable to their presumption. It is a pity that the air castles they build on such absurd bases as the identification of Marco Polo's *Sender Bendi* with *Kunpandyan* and of Sankara kavi with Sankaracharya are put before the public without any hesitation in the name of science, and evidences which we are bound to accept are rejected by them summarily as unreliable.

* According to the *agavals*, the lapse of time since Sambanthar's period is 3850 years. The difference of 385 years is probably the time which *Krittika* had yet to complete in the Thuruvam.

Before closing this subject I would like to draw the attention of the reader to a fact mentioned in the *Periyapuranam*, which will give us some clue to determine the age of Sambanthar or at least to have some idea of the antiquity of the time in which he lived. In describing the wager laid down between the Jains and Sambanthar, Sekkilar states that when the Jains laid their leaflet in the river *Vaigai*, it was driven at once to the sea :—

விடுதலும் விரைந்து கொண்டு வேலை மேற்படர்ந்ததன்றே
(Stanza 814)

காணவு மெய்தாவண்ணம் கடலின்மேற் செல்லுமேடு
(Stanza 816)

We know that the river is not connected with the sea at present —and evidently so from a long time back—and this has been referred to as a peculiarity of the river in the *Thiruvilayadalpuranam* and the *Thiruvathavurar puranam*. Its connection with the sea at any time does not seem to have been known at all to the authors of these *Puranams*, so much so, that they mistook the condition of the river at that time to have been its natural state, and took upon themselves to represent that condition in the light of a merit. But according to Sekkilar, the river was connected with the sea during the time of Thirugnanasambanthar and this connection is borne out by *Paripadal* also (see verse 20). It is, therefore, very clear that the connection of the river with the sea ceased long long ago, evidently as a result of the benign rule of some wise king who diverted the course of the river into some artificial tanks for purposes of irrigation. Sambanthar must certainly have lived long before this diversion, but we cannot say how long before. If we can trace the period of this diversion—and this must have been during the flourshng time of the Pandiyan kingdom, long before the Muhammadan invasion—cannot this be traced to the time of Nedunchelyan I who ruled about 150 A. D and who constructed several irrigation works? We can positively say that Sambanthar lived prior to that period. At any rate, the diversion not being known to modern literature, it is very clear that it took place at a very remote period—and Sambanthar's time must be remoter than that.

HIS SPIRITUAL EMINENCE

The spiritual advancement of Sampanthar was exceptionally high. He did not work for this advancement during his life time, and it is, therefore, evident that he worked for it in his previous birth. He must be said to have been a *samusittar* i.e., one who had completed the courses of *sariyai, kiriyai* and *yogam* in the previous births, and started the courses of *gnanam* as soon as he was born again. *Samusittars* are born with the main object of benefiting the world, and it will not, therefore, be wrong to say that he was an incarnation of a more or less perfect being. His position in the spiritual plane was so high that he was even identified with Lord Subramanya. But I do not think it possible to maintain this theory. Lord Subramanya not being different from Lord Siva, cannot be said to have been subject to birth. Sambanthar must be said to have been an advanced soul who had attained in his previous birth the *Sarupa Mukti* of Lord Subramanya, and hence it was that he was referred to in some Puranas as identical with Lord Subramanya.

We could see from the *Periyapuranam* and from his *Thevarams* themselves that his relationship with Siva was that of a son to his father. He had the rare privilege of being fed with the milk of *gnanam* by our Divine Mother and his comforts were carefully looked after by Lord Siva as a father would do to his affectionate son. The *shastras* speak of four *margas* or relationship with God for those devoted to Him; viz, *Thasamarga* (relationship between a servant and master), *Puththiramarga* (relationship between a son and father) *sakamarga* (relationship between a friend and friend) and *sanmarga* (union without distinction). Sambanthar's relationship with Siva was *Puthiramarga*—that between son and father.

He may even be taken in the light of a *Piralayakalar*, out of the three kinds of souls known as *Vingnanakalar*, *Piralayakalar* and *Sakalar*. Siva instructs *Vingnanakalars* by immanence in them, and when He instructs the *Piralayakalars* he appears before them in His genuine *Thadatta* form; but when He instructs the *Sakalars*, He puts on a human form and appears before them. It may be noticed from the *Periyapuranam* that whenever

Lord Siva appeared before Sambanthar, He did so with His genuine form, while in the case of the other saints, He generally appeared in a human form. The genuine form that Siva assumes is said to be *non-mayavic*, His grace being the material for the assumption of that form; and this form will only be visible to those that are highly advanced in spirituality. When Siva appeared before Sambanthar for the first time near the temple tank at Sirkali, the *Puranam* states that Siva Patha Iruthayar was not able to see Him while Sambanthar had a full vision of his Divine Father.

HIS MIRACLES

Miracles are rejected by some of our modernists on the ground that they are against the law of nature. In their idea, the law of nature is absolute and independent and they cannot imagine of any thing that guides or controls it. This is altogether an atheistic view and is diametrically opposed to the theistic doctrine. According to theism, the law of nature is but the principle laid down by God for working this material world, and this is no bar to the working of the spiritual or supernatural law. The spiritual or supernatural law shews itself in the material plane, not only by regulating and controlling the natural law, but even by suspending and superseding it—and those that are advanced in spirituality are quite capable of making use of the spiritual law. A king that enacts a law has the power not only to enforce the law but even to suspend the working of that law. Otherwise he cannot claim absolute sovereignty over the law. The grace of God that laid down the material law must certainly have the power to suspend the working of that law or to alter its course of working. Miracles are wrought by those who have access to the grace of God and have gained mastery over the material plane.

Miracles are claimed by all religions and are not rejected as impossibilities by any of them. Whatever may be their historic value, I must say that they are not impossibilities. People who are advanced in spirituality, whatever their religion may be, can perform miracles according to the standard of efficiency of their religions and according to their stage of spiritual advancement in that religion. A

man who is devoted to God in the light he sees Him, and enjoys the special grace of God through that devotion, can of course have mastery over the material plane to the extent of his vision of truth and to the extent of the grace of God that *alights* on him as a result of that vision; and he can perform miracles within the range of that vision. Sambanthar was able to see the truth beyond all the *mayavic* planes and the miracles wrought by him were therefore of a much higher order. The comparative merits of his miracles can be fully explained by adepts in the *Siddhanta* philosophy. Many of his miracles were wrought in competition with Jain and Buddhist spiritual experts whose mastery over the laws of nature was rendered ineffective in his presence. His exposition of philosophic truths in metrical forms when he was but three years of age, his attainment of the final beatitude with his corporeal form are miracles of an exceptional character that can hardly find a parallel in any other religion. Restoring to life the maiden girl who died several years ago, from the ashes of her cremated body is a miracle of a highly wonderful nature and I should say that the miracles of alien religions cannot stand a comparison with those of Gnanasambanthar.

Miracles, or *siddhis* as I may call them, are not cared for by those that have attained perfection, and the object of Sambanthar in having recourse to these *siddhis* requires, therefore, an explanation. As I have already said, Sambanthar was born with the main object of benefiting his co-religionists who were menaced by the strong influence of heretical faiths. No amount of reasoning or expounding religious doctrines would be as effectual with the ordinary people as a single *siddhi* or miracle. He was, therefore, obliged to do miracles and I may say that he was ordained to help the cause of his religion by working miracles. Miracles were not only wrought by him, but were even forced on him without his own seeking. Feeding him with divine milk, presenting him with a pair of golden cymbals, sending him a palanquin of pearls &c., &c., were miracles which he did not seek after. It is very clear that Lord Siva wanted Sambanthar to be as much attractive as possible to the world at large, and this was evidently the reason why He decorated him with many material splendours.

HIS METHOD OF WORK

Sambanthar was working assiduously and without any break for thirteen years—from his third year up to the sixteenth. His work consisted more of examples than of precepts. It is not that he refrained from religious discourses: his voluminous *Thevarams* were elaborate discourses, but they were not mere oratorical effusions as modern sermons and lectures are, but. they were largely emotional and they readily appealed to the heart of man. They are even now very effective in kindling in our heart true piety and love, and Sambanthar evidently realized the importance of these two factors in the plane of religion, and he, therefore, imparted knowledge clothed in love and piety. Not only his sayings, but his doings themselves largely contributed to inspire piety and love, The value he set upon love is clearly seen in several passages of his *Thevarams*, and I quote two of them for specimens :—

> " காதலாகிக் கசிந்து கண்ணீர் மல்கி
> ஓதுவார்தமை நன்னெறிக் குய்ப்பது."
> " உண்ணின்றுருக வுவகைதருவாரூர்போலும்"

He was at the same time fully alive to the importance of knowledge. Says he in his *Thevaram*:

> "கற்றல்கேட்டலுடையார் பெரியார்கழல் கையாற்றொழுதேத்தப்
> பெற்றமூர்ந்த பிரமாபுரமேவிய பெம்மான்"

He saw, however, the evil of mere book knowledge and he warned the people of this evil.

> " சாத்திரத்தார் சொல்—இடுக்கண் வருமொழிகேளா தீசனையே
> போற்றுமின்கள் "

His service consisted largely of his visits to the numerous temples scattered all over the Tamil lands and in hymning *Thevarams* at each temple, so that the people of all these places may be benefited. His visits to these temple may be said to have been a lecturing tour—not a tour of mere speech-making, but a tour of imparting some instruction both by example and precept. Although at his time, there were no railway communications or such road facilities as we have

at present, he was not in the least disheartened by his tiresome journeys. He did not care for the burning tropical sun or for the shivering cold of the dewy season. Neither famine nor pestilence nor the fear of his diabolical enemies made him swerve from his duty. He demonstrated by practical proofs that Lord Siva will always be by the side of those devoted to Him and to His service.

When Appar, his elder contemporary, entertained some fear about the Jains and of the unfavourable position of the planets at the time when Sambanther wanted to start for Madura, he expressed his reliance on the grace of God and he was confident that he would not be hurt in the least. He told Thirunavukkarasar,

"பரசுவது நம் பெருமான்கழல்களென்றாற்பழுதணையாது"

He did not, however, reject altogether the suggestion as regards the planetary influence. He invoked the grace of God by his *Kolarupathikam* in order to neutralize that influence* and set out on the mission that he had undertaken.

When the queen of the Pandyan king was nervous, being afraid of the Jains who mustered strong against the single handed child-saint, he dispelled her fear by his unflinching faith in the grace of God. Said he to the queen;

"மானினேர்விழிமாதராய் வழுதிக்குமா பெருந்தேவிகேள்
பானல்வா யொருபால னீங்கிவன் என்றுநீ பரிவெய்திடேல்
ஆனைமாமலையாதியாய விடங்களிற் பலவல்லல்சேர்
ஈனர்கட்கெளியேனலேன் திருவாலவாயரனிற்கவே"

These facts would clearly shew how bold he was in mind, although a child as he was. His courage was evidently due to his faith in God.

* We could see that although the influence of the planets did not affect the saint, evidently as a result of the *Thevaram*, still the influence was not without its effect, the madam in which the saint slept having been set fire to by the Jains.

This incident throws some light on the force of *Pirarapta* and the means to avert it. Although Sambanthar was a perfect gnani still the *Pirarapta* had to be enjoyed and he wanted to check the force of that *Pirarapta* in the interest of the service that he had undertaken.

He was full of sympathy towards fellow beings and this is clearly seen in his Thirumarugal and Thiruppachilachchiramam miracles and in feeding those who were affected by famine. He was very forward in encouraging those that were devoted to Siva and in firmly grounding them in their faith—and this is borne out by his Thirumylappur and Thiruvottiyur miracles. He fully realized the necessity of rituals for the ordinary people and this is evident from his *Upanayana* and marriage ceremonies to which he submitted himself and also from the fact that he obtained funds from Lord Siva to enable his father to carry on a *yangna*. He strongly emphasized the importance of the four paths of *Sariyai*, *kiriyai*, *yogam* and *gnanam* and he profusely refers to their importance in his Thevarams. The following are a few specimens :—

SARIYAI

" தொண்டர்தண்கய மூழ்கித் துணையலுஞ் சாந்தமும் புகையுங்
கொண்டு கொண்டடிபரவிக்குறிப்பறிமுருகன் செய்கோயில் "

KIRIYAI

" யோசனைபோய்ப்பூக்கொணர்ந் தங்கொருநாளுமொழியாமே
பூசனைசெய்தினி திருந்தான் புள்ளிருக்கும் வேளூரே.

YOGAM

" அஞ்சுமொன்றி யாறுவீசி நீறுபூசி மேனியிற்
குஞ்சியாரவந்தி செய்யவஞ்சலென்னி மன்னுமூர் "

GNANAM

" மறவிய சிந்தனை மாற்றி வாழவல்லார் தமக்கென்றும்
பிறவியறுக்கும் பிரானூர் பெரும்புகலூர் பிரியாரே "

He fully realized the importance of temple worship, as his career from his infancy would clearly shew, and he was strongly impressed of the importance of the festivals and special *poojas* in temples as his *Poompavai pathigam* would amply bear out.

He was a strong believer in the *Vedas* and the *Agamas*, as the following extract will show :—

"தொகுத்தவனருமறையங்கமாகமம்
வகுத்தவன்"
"வேதத்திலுள்ளது நீறு"

and he makes a very large use of the Puranic accounts all over his *Thevaram.*

He lays great stress on the importance of *Vibuti* (sacred ashes) *Rudraksha* (sacred beads) and *Panchakshara* (the five mystic letters)

"மந்திர மாவது நீறு"
"நெக்குள்ளார்வமிகப் பெருகிநினைந்
தக்குமாலை கொடங்கையி லெண்ணுவார்
தக்கவானவ ராய்த்தகுவிப்பது
நக்கனும நமச்சிவாயவே".

He was a Brahmin of Brahmins and he fully recognized the importance of caste rules : he saw the spiritual influence of the Brahmins and he always hailed and saluted them :—

"வாழ்க வந்தணர்"

Although he very rigidly observed the caste rules in order to set an example to the people of the secular plane, he was still fully alive to the greatness of the *gnanis*, and this is amply borne out by his worship to the Sudra saint, Thirunavukkarasar.

He was very much attached to those devoted to Siva and this is manifest from his cordial relation to Thirunilakandapperumpanar, and from the various appreciative references made by him to Siruttondar, Murugar, Kungilyakkalayar, Kannappar and others and also from the great regard he had to Mangayarkarasiar and Kulachchirai Nayanar.

He was a dutiful son and paid all the respects due to his parents. Although he was a *gnani* of a very high order, still he did not disregard his parents who were much below him in the spiritual plane. This bears a striking contrast to the conduct of an alleged

prophet who despised his mother by calling her "woman" and telling her "what have I to do with thee". When Sivapatha Iruthayar went to Madura to see his son after his encounter with the Jains, Sambanthar rushed out as soon as he heard of his father's arrival and worshipped him.

His sense of justice itself deserves special mention. When the Jains were defeated and were impaled by the king's minister, Sambanthar did not show them any clemency, and he did not stop the minister from carrying out the punishment they deserved. He may be said to have been wanting in sympathy, but it would be a false sympathy if it is extended to people who did not deserve it. The Jains were not only enemies to the cause of truth, but they were guilty of the serious offence of setting fire to the *Madam* occupied by those devoted to Siva. Although they had clear proof of the futility of their religion, they were obstinate and obdurate and they would not acknowledge the merits of the Saiva faith. They, therefore fully deserved the punishment which they themselves had undertaken to suffer when they offered the challenge, and Sambanthar would not, therefore, show them any clemency, but wanted that justice should have its own way. The Buddhists, at Pothyamankai were reasonable men and they acknowledged their defeat in their controversy with the amanuensis of Sambanthar and became converts at once and received holy ashes at the hands of the saint. But the Jains having been obdurate they fully deserved the punishment meted out to them.

He had a very large number of followers and admirers, and still he did not want to start any new sect or creed as many others have done. He was fully orthodox and his object was to maintain and uphold *Vaithikasaivam*, the religion of the *vedas* and the *agamas*. Although he was a great *gnani*, he followed the *kiriyapatham* in order to set an example to the ordinary people, and there can be no doubt, therefore, that he was an incarnation to benefit the people.

HIS THEVARAMS

Thevaram means "Garland to the God" and the outpouring of love in metrical forms by the three saints Sambanthar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundarar are known as Thevarams, while the songs of

Saint Manikkavasagar are known as *Thiruvasakam.* I may say without fear of contradiction that these songs stand unparalleled in their efficacy as a means to excite love and piety, They are at the same time a store-house of spiritiral truths and they are, therefore, known as Tamil-*Vedas*. Sekkilar, the author of *Periyapuranam* refers to them as such in many places and they are reputed as the Vedas of the Tamil race all over the Tamil country. The import of the Vedas may be found largely embodied in the Thevarams, and like the Vedas the *Thevaram* themselves have a mystic aspect.

Sambanthar fully realized the importance and suitability of the Tamil language as a medium to convey spiritual truths, and this fact has been distinctly mentioned by him in several places. The following are a few of his many sayings on this subject:—

"தமிழ்சொலும் வடசொலுந்தாணிழல்சேர"
"அந்தணர்வேள்வியும் அருமறைத்துழனியும்.
"செந்தமிழ்க்கீதமுஞ் சீரினால் வளர்தர."
"ஆரியத்தொடு செந்தமிழ்ப்பயன றிகிலாவந்தகர்.'
"செந்தமிழர் தெய்வமறை நாவர் செழுநற்கலை தெரிந்தவரோ.
டந்தமில் குணத்தவர் களர்ச்சனைகள் செய்யவமர்கின்றவரன்."

In his view, Sanskrit and Tamil were both of equal merit in the light of religion, He gave a practical proof of this fact in his Vetharanyam miracle. The Tamil *Thevaram* had the full mystic power to open the doors closed by the Sanskrit *Vedas* His *Kolarupathigam*, *Thirunittuppathigam*, *Panchadcharappathigam*, *Namachchivayappathigam*, and many other *Pathigams*, are regularly chanted even to-day as effectual means to obtain what one wishes to secure.

The *Thevarams* however, do not ignore the importance of the *Vedas* and the *Agamas*. They fully acknowledge their merits as revelations given by God, and the following extracts from Sambanthar's *Thevaram* strongly support this view :—

"வேதமுடைய விமலர்."
"பண்ணமருநான் மறையர்"
"அரங்கமமிகக் கூறும்."
"மந்திரத்தான் றந்திரத்தான்."

Several Vedic truths explained by the *Upanishads* and the *Agamas* are brought out by Sambanthar in his Thevaram. The incomprehensive transcendency of God is brought out in passages like

> இன்னவுருவின்னநிற மென்றறிவதேல ரிதுநீதிபலவும்;
> தன்னவுருவாமென மிகுத்தவனீ தியொடுதானமர்விடம்.

and His position as one of the Trinity, and still far above the triad is brought out in passages like

> "மூவருமாகி யிருவருமாகி முதல்வனுமாய் நின்ற மூர்த்தி."

Many sublime truths of the Siddhanta philosophy may be found indicated by *Sambanthar* in his Thevarams, and the following are a few specimens :—

> "விளையாததொர் பரிசில்வரு பசுபாசவேதனையொண்
> டளையாயின தவிர வருடலைவன்."
> "சேர்வார்தாமே தாமாகச் செய்யுமவன்."
> "நிறையானிலைபவர் குறையா ரின்பமே."
> "ஞானத்திரளாய் நின்ற பெம்மான்."
> "சார்ந்தவர்க்கின்பங்கடழைக்கும் வண்ணம் நேர்ந்தவன்;"
> "ஓதிநல்குலவர்வார்க் குணர்வுடை ஓவார்."
> "வந்தித்திருக்குமடியார் தங்கள் வருமேல் வினையோடு
> பந்தித்திருந்தபாவந் தீர்க்கும் பரமன்.

The Divinity of Vinayaka and Subramanya has been clearly referred to in his *Thevarams* as the following passages will show :—

> "கரியாமுகமுடைய கணபதி தாதை'
> சேந்தனை முன்பயந்துலகிற் றேவர்கடம்பகை
> கெடுத்தோன்"

and the motherhood of Umathevi is given great prominence.

> "உண்ணாமுலை யுமையாளொடுமுடனாகிய ஒருவன்"

In every decad of his voluminous *Thevarams*, Sambanthar makes invariable reference to (1) the unlimited grace of God (2) His incomprehensibility even by advanced souls and (3) the necessity of the true religion. The eighth, ninth and tenth verses of every decad is

devoted to enforce these truths by making reference to the grace bestowed on Ravana to the futile attempts made by Brahma and Vishnu to find out the Head and Foot of Lord Siva and to the worthlessness of Buddhism and Jainism.

As I have already said, the *Thevarams* have an occult aspect and they are possessed of a mystic virtue. Sekkilar states in his *Periyapuranam* that certain words used by Sambanthar in his *Thevaram* were chiefly instrumental in giving life to the remains of Poompavai, and that the palmyrah trees of Thiruvothur having been referred to in the *Thevaram*, attained heaven at the end of their life. The temples in praise of which Sambanthar and the other saints composed *Thevarams* are considered even to-day as being possessed of special merits, and this is certainly attributable to the occult influence of the *Thevarams*.

The *Thevarams* are inspired words of God and Sambanthar himself refers to this fact in one of his *Thevarams*:—

"எனதுரை தனதுரையாக நீறணிந்தேறுகந் தேறியநிமலன்"

The *Thevarams* of Sambanthar bear sufficient evidence to the miracles attributed to him. The incidence of God-dess Parvati, feeding him with divine milk is borne out by the passage

"போதையார் பொற்கிண்ணத் தடிசில் பொல்லாதெனத்
தாதையார் முனிவுறத் தானெனை யாண்டவன்."

and the Mailapur miracle and most of the other miracles are referred to in his *Thevarams*. The fact that he was carried by his father on shoulders when he was a little child is itself mentioned in his *Thevaram*,

"அத்தர்பிரான்மே லிருந்தின்னிசையா லுரைத்த பனுவல்."

Sambanthar's Thevarams are possessed of the peculiar merit of displaying the three kinds of Tamil known as *Iyattamil*, *Isaittamil* and *Nadagattamil* and he is, therefore, known as முத்தமிழ்விரகன். The musical tunes of his Thevarams are simply bewitching and as an art of classical literature they stand unequalled.

A minute study of his *Thevarams* would highly benefit the the student, and a summary of the saint's life would be very useful to him. I, therefore, undertook the translation of Sambanthar's life as narrated by Sekkilar in his *Periyapuranam*, a prose version of which was given by the late Sri la Sri Arumuga Navalar. This prose version was very useful to me for my translation, and I may say that I followed this version mostly, which I should think gives the history of the saint's life as faithfully and as correctly as the original, the poetical decorations being excepted. It is my intention to bring out the lives of the other saints as well in English, and in fact, I have completed a large number of them. I hope that I will find the time and the means to publish them as early as possible.

Kockuvill, Jaffna,
29th April, 1920.

S. SABARATNAM.

THIRU GNANA SAMBANTHAR

HIS BIRTH AND RE-BIRTH

AT SIRKALI, a place sacred to Siva and known by twelve names* in the land of Cholamandalam, there lived a Brahmin by the name of Siva Patha Iruthaiyar. He belonged to the *Kavunya Gothra*† that was renowned for its Vedic erudition. His partner in life was Bakavatiar, a model of Chastity. The husband and wife were both descendants of pure saivite families on either side of their parentage. Convinced of the truth that Siva is the supreme God, and not the souls who were mistaken as such by the indiscreet, they were leading an exemplary household life, devoting their time to the fostering of the spirit of love and reverence to the sacred ashes,‡ which were declared by the *Upanishats* as an effective remedy for the impurity of the souls.

Full of love, as the Brahman was, towards all fellow creatures, he was very sorry to find that the pretentious creeds of the Jains and the Buddhists were flourishing throughout the Tamil land owing to their mischievous propaganda, while the religion propounded by the Vedic and the Agamic revelations was declining thereby, with the result that the use of the sacred ashes by the people of the land was being gradually neglected. He was therefore anxious to beget a son who could eradicate the new creeds and establish the true religion, so that the souls of the present and the future might all be saved. He invoked the Grace of the God and the Goddess presiding at the temple of Sirkali for the purpose of realizing his ambition, and performed a *Tapas*‖. As a result of his *Tapas*, his wife was conceived of a child, and this gave the Brahmin great pleasure. He felt exceedingly

* The names are omitted here for the sake of brevity.

† Family.

‡ The emblem of the Saiva religion.

‖ An austere form of devotional practice.

thankful to God for the response made to his humble prayer, and performed at appointed times the necessary Vedic ceremonies during the ten months of his wife's pregnancy, in the company of his relations.

When he was thus in the enjoyment of the Bliss of God, on a very auspicious day,—the Sun and the other planets being strongly posted,—when the Moon was in the asterism of Thiruvathirai* on an excellent Lagna† was born the Divine Child, announcing, as it were, the disappearance of the evils of alien religions and the dissemination of the Saivite faith. The various rites of *Jatakarma*‡ &c were duly performed on account of the child at the prescribed times with much enthusiasm.

In the third year the child having evidently felt his separation from his Divine Father || would at times be suddenly alarmed and shew signs of emotion. One day, when the father was starting for his bath, the child, prompted by the will of the Providence, followed him crying. The father tried to dissuade, but without success. The child insisted on accompanying the father who was obliged to yield.

Approaching the temple tank, Sivapatha Iruthaiyar left the child on the banks and stepped into the water and was engaged in carrying out his ablution. Having been left alone, the child looked round very much perplexed, when his attention was arrested by the tower of the temple which recalled to his mind such a recollection of his previous connection that he began to sob and weep calling out "Mother! Father!!" This excited the paternal feeling of the Heavenly Father presiding at the temple, who, with a view to reward the child for his past services, appeared in the heavens on His Bull, with His Consort, the Divine Mother, on the left, and asked Her to feed the child with Her milk and soothe him. The Goddess alighted from the Bull, and with feeling of maternal affection, filled a golden cup with Her milk, mixed *Sivagnanam* § with it and fed the child and soothed him.

* The sixth lunar mansion.

† The ascension of the ecliptic.

‡ A ceremony performed on the birth of a child.

|| Sambantha is said to be an *avatar* of Subramanya: not that Subramanya Himself incarnated as Sambantha, but Sambantha was an advanced soul who attained the *Sarupa* of Subramanya.

§ Realization of Truth.

The child having been voluntarily bought over by his Divine Parents was known as *Aludaya Pillaiyar*, and as he was fed with *Sivagnanam* he was called *Thiru Gnana Sambantha Murti Nayanar*.

Sivapatha Iruthayar finished his ablution, and went up to the child in whose mouth he noticed milk. The Brahmin was very much vexed,* and taking a shoot in his hands threatened the child and asked him to show the person that gave him the milk. The child with tears of genuine love streaming from his eyes and with his index finger raised towards the sky, improvised the following hymn in reply to his father :—

"தோடுடைய செவியன் விடையேறியோர் தூவெண்மதிசூடி
காடுடைய சுடலைப்பொடி பூசியென்னுள்ளங் கவர்கள்வன்
ஏடுடைய மலரான் முனைநாட் பணிந்தேத்தவருள்செய்த
பீடுடைய பிரமாபுரமேவிய பெம்மானிவனன்றே".

(He wears a stud in one of His ears;
He rides a Bull; He has a crescent in His Crown;
He daubs His body with ashes of the crematorium;
He is the thief who steals my heart;
He bestowed His grace in days of yore
When worshipped with flowers fragrant;
He presides at Piramapuram; †
This is He).

The first letter and the first word of the hymn are of great significance. The Pillayar‡ used the mystic *Piranava*, conjoined with a consonant for the first letter; and as he desired that his hymn should be heard by Lord Siva, he used the word தோடு for the first word which qualified His ear.|| The stanza quoted above was

* It is one of the very strict caste rules that a Brahmin should not eat anything at the hands of a non-Brahmin.

† One of the twelve names for Sirkali.

‡ *Pilliar* means a child with an honorofic suffix: the Saint is known throughout the Purana by this name.

|| There is another great significance in the first word used by the Pilliar. It is through Grace the souls have to approach God. The Grace of God is His *sakti*: and in the form assumed by Lord Siva, His left half represents His *sakti* principle: and His left ear has therefore a தோடு (an ear ornament for females) while the right ear has a குண்டலம் (a male ornament). The Pilliar wanted that his hymns should be heard especially by the left ear, as he knew that he could only approach Siva through His grace.

followed by nine other verses of the same metre, and a Padigam* was completed. Reference was made in the eighth verse to the mercy of God vouchsafed to the souls on their sincere repentance—and the anecdote of Ravana was quoted as an instance; the ninth verse made reference to the great truth that genuine love, and not power or prowess, is the means of salvation, and the arrogance on the part of Brahma and Vishnu which was exhibited in their endeavour to discover the Head and Feet of Lord Siva was cited as an illustration; and the tenth verse referred to the futility of the religion of the Jains and the Buddhists†.

This miraculous incident brought forth a shower of flowers from the celestial region. The Divine Figure that appeared in the Heavens moved towards the temple, and the child followed It until It vanished into the temple. Siva Patha Iruthayar who had the rare merit of begetting such a child, danced in a state of ecstasy, anxiety and perplexity, with his hands clasped over his head. His joy knew no bounds when he learnt the context of the songs improvised by his miraculous child. Although the Brahmin was not gifted to have a sight of the Divine Figure‡ that appeared in the Heavens, he was fully convinced that the incident was an expression of the grace of Lord Siva, and he walked behind his miraculous child, forgetting himself in his ecstasy.

The news spread in all directions, and Brahmins collected in large numbers in front of the main tower gate, quite amazed and perplexed with the hairs of their body standing on ends, and questioning each other "where have we heard of an occurrence like this?" The child entered the temple, and repairing to the presence of the God who was seated in a Dhony‖ extemporized another Padigam. When he got out,

* A decad of ten stanzas.

† The 8th, 9th and the 10th verses of all the Padigams of the Pilliar may be found to refer to these three facts invariably.

‡ The Form assumed by Siva was of His Grace to behold which Siva Patha Iruthiar had not attained sufficient spiritual advancement.

‖ The temple is said to have floated like a Dhony (a barque) during a certain deluge—and hence the place got the name Donypuram. To mark this event, the image of the local deity was placed on a Dhony which was preserved in good order until very lately. It appears that the Dhony was removed when the temple was repaired some years ago.

the Brahmins and others who had collected at the gate fell at his feet and worshipped him. The blessed father took the child on his shoulders, and carrying him in procession amidst the sounding on musical instruments, the chanting of the Vedas and the cheers of Saiva devotees, returned to his house.

PRESENTED WITH GOLDEN CYMBAL

On the following morning, the child (or the Pilliar as he was popularly known) worshipped his Divine Parents in the temple and proceeded to Tirukkolakka*. Arriving at the temple of this place, he made a [illegible] of the temple, and standing in the front, started a Padigam, in singing which he kept time by striking his hands; whereupon a set of golden cymbals with the mystic Panchadchara † inscribed therein alighted in his hands. The Pilliar felt highly delighted and grateful, and completed the Padigam in which the seven musical tunes ‡ were richly displayed, so much so, that the celestial choristers showered forth flowers and worshipped him.

When the Pilliar left the temple, the father would not suffer him walk: he took the child on his shoulders and carried him. Of his return to Sirkali, the Pilliar got into the temple once more, made the usual round and extemporized another Padigam. He then got to his house which he graced presenting his infantine appearance to the view of the people of Sirkali. Brahmins, devotees and others from the adjoining villages, and from Tirunanipalli, the birth place of his mother, visited him in large numbers and worshipped him.

COMMENCEMENT OF HIS PILGRIMAGE

At the request of the Brahmins of Tirunanipalli, the Pillaiyar started on a pilgrimage to the temple of that place. The father would not allow the child walk or be carried by others. He took him on his shoulders and walked up to Tirunanipalli. A grove in the opposite direction having attracted the attention of the Pillaiyar, he

* This temple is about half a mile on the west of Sirkali. It is known even now as Thalakkoil (the cymbal temple.)

† Panchadchara (five letters) represents the name and form of Siva and is a mine of occult meaning.

‡ The Hindu music has seven tunes.

found out from his father that it belonged to Tirunanipalli, and started a Padigam in praise of the Deity presiding in the temple of the place. On his arrival at Tirunanipalli, he went to the temple and worshipped the God. He spent some time in the place, and on his way back to Sirkali he visited Thalaichchenkadu and other places * and extemporized hymns at each of them. At Sirkali he served the God daily, visiting at intervals Thirumayendrappalli, Thirukkarukavur and other places.

HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THIRUNILA KANDAPPERUMPANAR

About this time, Tirunilakandapperumpanar, a Saiva devotee and lutist, paid a visit to the Pilliar in company with Viralyar. The Pilliar received them cordially, and took them to the temple and made them worship the God. After worship, Tirunilakandapperumpanar served the God by playing on his lute, as requested by the Pilliar, who was greatly pleased at the skill displayed by the lutist. Viralyar contributed to the service by his vocal music. The Pilliar took the lutist back to his house and accommodated him there and had him as his guest. The lutist was very much taken up by the hymns of the Pilliar and he took great pleasure in playing them on his lute. When he expressed a desire to remain in the company of the Pilliar for some time and enjoy the privilege of rendering musical service by playing his hymns on the lute, the offer was gladly accepted by the Pilliar with whom the lutist remained accordingly.

HIS VISIT TO CHITHAMPARAM

The Pilliar was now anxious to worship Sabanayaka, the actor of the dance of cosmic energy in the plane of consciousness which is represented by the golden hall at Chithamparam,† the Chuzhumunanadi‡ of the earth. He started with his father, Tirunilakandapperumpanar and others, and proceeded to the holy land. On approaching the

* The Puranam mentions by name five other places which are omitted here for the sake of brevity.

† The word literally means the *conscious plane* (Chit-amparam).

‡ The Vital nerve.

boundary limit, he worshipped the place itself, and then continued his journey to the temple. The Brahmins of the temple and other devotees received him with great delight at the southern gate. He worshipped the tower of the temple and its procession streets, and got into the temple. He went round the *Maligai** worshipped Perampalam† and arrived at the Golden Hall‡. Here he beheld Sabanayaka in His dance of eternal Bliss, the form assumed by Him being His grace|| itself, in the region of Gnanásabai$ which was as resplendent as the light of a thousand suns collected together. The child stood motionless immersed in the Bliss of Siva. His hands involuntarily rising over his head, his hairs standing on ends, his tongue faltering, tears streaming from his eyes, he improvised a Pathigam with the words "கற்றாங்கெரியோம்பி" for its initial.

At the close of the Pathigam he went round the *Maligai*, and left the holy precincts. As he got out, he fell down and worshipped at the front yard, and when he passed out of the tower gate he worshipped the tower¶ and the procession streets. Being afraid to live in the place℘ he went to Tiruvedkalam[] worshipped the God of the temple here with Padigams in His praise, and took up his residence there. From there he used to go to Chithamparam for worship. During his stay at Tiruvedkalam, he visited Tirukkalippalai and improvised hymns. The Padigams of the Pillayar, were played on his lute by Perumpanar. During one of the Pilliar's visit to Chithamparam, the three thousand Brahmins() of the temple looked like Sivakananathers °

* This apparently refers to the temple of Tirumulattanesar.

† This is the Hall by the side of the entrance into Kanakasabai on the East.

‡ This is known as Kanakasabai, being coverd with golden tiles.

|| Not Suddha Maya.

$ This is the holy of holies where Sabanayaka is located. The literal meaning of the word is the *hall of Divine wisdom*.

The structure of the Chithamparam temple is full of occult meaning which can only be deciphered with the help of the Agamas.

¶ The Pilliar's visit to the temple throws much light on the formula to be observed in visiting Chithamparam for worship.

℘ The temple, in his opinion, was too holy for him to live in.

[] This temple is about two miles on the North East.

() The Brahmins of Chithamparam were three thousand at that time and they were themselves canonized as saints.

o Celestial attendants of Siva.

by a Divine dispensation ; the phenomenon was pointed out by the Pilliar to his ministrel companion. The Brahmins, as usual, worshipped the Pilliar when they saw him, and the Pilliar himself worshipped them before they worshipped him. He got into the temple, and after worshipping Sabanayaka, started the Padigam* "ஆடினை நறுநெய்யொடுபாறயிர்" in which reference was made to the phenomenon noticed by him, and the temple was referred to as one that was served by Brahmins of such merit.

PRESENTED WITH A JEWELLED PALANQUIN

At the request of the ministrel saint, the Pilliar paid a visit to Tiruverukkattampuliyur, the birth place of the former. From there he visited Thirumutukunrur. He then visited Thiruppennakadam, from where he intended to visit Thiruvaratturai. All along his journey up to this period, he was carried by his father. He now decided to walk his way with his slender feet. At about sunset that day, he reached Maranpadi and spent the night there, feeling tired of walking.

The God of Tiruvaratturai was touched by the child's hardship, and He appeared in a vision to the Brahmins of the place that night, and bade them to remove and present to the child a pearl-wrought palanquin, umbrella and flute which, He said, would be found in the temple. At day break, the Brahmins opened the temple and, to their great surpirse, found the God-sent things there. They carried them with great enthusiasm amidst the sounding of celestial music and the ecstasic dance of Saiva devotees and delivered them, in the name of Siva, to the Pilliar who had himself been advised in his dream of the despatch of the presents.

The Pilliar expressed his gratitude to his Divine Father by the Padigam "எந்தையீசனெம்பெருமான்" worshipped the palanquin, after going round the same, and got into it pronouncing the sacred *Panchadcharam*. This scene created such a thrill among the crowd that assembled there that the devotees shouted in ecstasy, the Brahmins chanted the Vedic hymns, and the celestials themselves showered forth

* The words are the initial words of the Padigam. Throughout the translation, the Padigams will be referred to by their initial words.

flowers over the child, very much excited. As the procession moved, with the child in the palanquin, and the umbrella unfolded over it, the Brahmins and devotees danced in rapture, with tears of joy flowing from their eyes, and the flute presented by Lord Siva proclaimed in melodious tune the coming of the Pilliar, referring to his various merits. On his arrival at Tiruvaratturai, the Pilliar got down from his palanquin at some distance from the tower gate of the temple, walked on foot, and got into the temple. He came round the temple and worshipped in front of the sanctuary and improvised a Padigam in praise of His Divine Father. The Pilliar remained in the place for some time. During his stay in the place, he visited Tirunelvennai and other places.

HIS INVESTITURE WITH THE SACRED THREAD

From Tiruvaratturai he started back to Sirkali visiting on his way Tiruppaluvur and other places*. When he got to the boundary limit of Tiruchcheygnalur, he alighted from his palanquin, as it was the birth place of Sandesvara Nayanar†, and went on foot to the temple, where he worshipped God and improvised the Padigam "சீரடைந்தபாலதாட்ட". He then visited Tiruppananthal and other places and proceeded towards Sirkali. He was received at Sirkali with great rejoicing by the Brahmins of the place who decorated the streets and went a long way to meet the Pilliar whom they had the great fortune of seeing seated in the palanquin of pearls and under the umbrella which was likewise wrought with pearls. They surrounded the palanquin and worshipped and praised the Pilliar with their hands joined over their heads, very much delighted by their sight and greatly rejoicing at heart. The Pilliar got down from his palanquin, went to the temple, worshipped the God singing His praise in a Padigam, and got to his house directing Tirunilakandapperumpanar to his residence. At the entrance of the house, he was received by Brahmin ladies who welcomed him with Niraikudams ‡ &c. The mother rubbed sacred ashes on the forehead of the Divine child and worshipped him. The child rewarded her with his grace and got in.

* The Puranam mentions four places by names.

† Sandesvara Nayanar was a canonized saint of a very antique period.

‡ Niraikudam is a vessel filled with water as an emblem of fulness.

The Pilliar now attained the age of Upanayana* and the Brahmins performed the necessary Vedic rites. Although the Pilliar was far above the ritual stage, he submitted himself to the rites performed by the Brahmins with a view to impress on the public the importance of the Vedic rites. At the close of the ceremony, they gave him authority to make use of the four Vedas and proceeded to initiate him in the Mantras. But to their great surprise, the child chanted numerous Vedic texts and quoted several passages from the subsidiary shastras in explanation of those texts. The Brahmins found that the child enjoyed the grace of God immensely, worshipped him with praise, and had their doutbs cleared on several Vedic texts which were obscure to them till then. The child then improvised the Padigams "துஞ்சலுந் துஞ்சலிலாத போழ்தினும்" in which he inculcated the truth that Panchadchara is the source of all Mantras and that it is of great importance to the Brahmins. The Padigam was highly instructive to the Brahmins who accepted the instructions with great reverence.

VISIT BY TIRUNAVUKKARASAR

The name and fame of the Pilliar having reached the ears of Tirunavukkarasar†, he started on a journey to visit the Pilliar and arrived at Sirkali. The news having been conveyed to the Pilliar, he was greatly delighted, and started with a large conclave of Saiva devotees to receive Tirunavukkarasar. When the two Saints met, they worshipped each other with feelings of genuine love. Pilliar took Tirunavukkarasar to the temple for worship, and from there to his house, where he entertained the visitor as his guest. A few days after, Tirunavukkarasar left Sirkali with the object of visiting other sacred shrines, and the Pilliar accompanied him as far as Tirukkolakka and returned to Sirkali. At Sirkali, he was singing the praises of his Divine Father with various Pathigams which Tirunilakandapperumpanar played on his lute assisted by Viralyar.

* Admittance into the Brahminical order.

† One of the four renowned Tamil Saints.

MIRACULOUS CURE OF A MAIDEN ATTACKED WITH *MUYALAKAN*

Some time after, he expressed to his father and others his desire to proceed on a pilgrimage to the various temples sacred to Siva throughout the Tamil land, and to improvise Pathigams in His praise. The father could not bear the child's separation, and he therefore proposed to accompany the child, although he had in view to perform a Yanjna that would benefit him here and hereafter. The proposal was accepted, and the Pilliar got leave of his Divine Father in the temple, and set out on his pilgrimage in the palanquin presented by the Lord of Tiruvaratturai. He went to Tirukkannarkoyil, and from there he travelled towards the West, on the northern side of the Cauveri, and visited Tiruppullirukkuvelur and other places * and improvised Pathigams at each of them.

He then got into the Mazhanadu and travelled towards Tiruppallavanichcharam. A man of this place, Kollimalavan by name, had a daughter who was ailing with the disease known as *Muyalakan* † As the disease could not have been cured by any other means, the man was very much grieved, and a Saivite by birth as he was, he took his daughter to the temple and laid her in front of the sanctuary. The sounding of the music in the Pilliar's procession having proclaimed his visit, Kollimalavan left his daughter in the temple, went up hurriedly to the town, decorated it, and welcomed the Pilliar. He fell on the ground in front of the Pilliar's palanquin, as a tree severed from its trunk, with tears flowing from his eyes. The Pilliar having asked him to rise up, he rose from the ground and followed the palanquin until it stopped at the entrance of the temple. The Pilliar got down, made a round of the temple and noticed the girl lying on the ground senseless. Ascertaining from the father the nature of the girl's illness, the Pilliar was very much moved, prayed to Siva for the cure of her ailment, and extemporized the Pathigam "துணிவளர்திங்கள்", every stanza of which ended with the line "மணிவளர் கண்டரோ மங்கையைவாட மயல்செய்வதோ இவர்மாண்பே" (Black

* The Puranam gives the names of 25 places.

† A deadly malady of the type of titanus.

throated as He is, would He suffer this maiden to ail ?*). The girl was cured instantaneously. She rose up from the ground and stood by the side of her father who felt immensely glad at the cure of his daughter. Both the father and the daughter fell at the Pilliar's feet and worshipped him. The Pilliar spent a few days in the place serving his Lord in the temple.

MAKES THE WEATHER CHANGE

Resuming his pilgrimage, the Pilliar visited Tiruppaingnili and Tiruvinkoymalai, and then directed his course towards the Konga land on the Southern side of the river Cauveri and visited Tirukkodimadachchemkunrur, where he remained serving his Lord in the temple. From here he visited Tirunana and returned to Chenkunrur. The rainy season having been over and the dewy season set in at about this time, his followers suffered from cold and fever and complained of their suffering to the Pilliar. He prayed for a change of weather and improvised the Pathigam "அவ்வினைக்கிவ்வினை". The prayer was readily granted. Not only the residents of the town, but the people of the whole District enjoyed the change. The saint visited again Tiruppandikkodumuḍi and other places and entered into the Chola land.

PRESENTED WITH A JEWELLED CANOPY

In the Chola land, he visited Tirupparaitturai and other places † and arrived at Tiruvalanchuli and served his Lord in the temple. The hot weather now set in, and Pilliar left Tiruvalanchuli and proceeded with his followers towards Tiruppalaiyarai, visiting on the way Tiruvaraimettali and Thiruchchattimuttam. He was travelling again towards Thiruppattichcharam in a powerful sun when one of the attendant ghosts of Siva dropped a canopy of pearls from the sky and said "I have been sent by the Lord of Pattichcharam". Pilliar praised the grace of God and worshipped Him falling on the ground. The attendants of the saint caught hold of the canopy by its shafts and

* The black throat of Siva reminds to the souls His gracious act in swallowing the deadly poison that merged out of the sea and threatened to destroy the celestials.

† The Puranam mentions 23 names.

held it over him. He arrived at Pattichcharam under the shade of the canopy and worshipped the God at the temple there. Leaving Thiruppattichcharam, he visited Thiruvaraivadathali and other places* and arrived at Thiruvavaduthurai.

OBTAINS AN INEXHAUSTIBLE PURSE

The Pillayar spent a few days at Tiruvavaduthurai serving Siva in the temple. Sivapatha Iruthaiyar, his father, now expressed his desire to return to Sirkali as it was time to perform the Yanjna which he had in view, and applied for funds. The Pilliar went to the temple and improvised the hymn "இடரினுந்தளரினும்". Whereupon a ghost appeared and placed on the altar a purse of gold and said "This is an inexhaustible purse. This is presented to you by Lord Siva". Pilliar worshipped the God falling on the ground, took the purse on his head and handed it over to his father. He said "This purse will never be exhausted so long as its contents are used by you and the other Brahmins of Sirkali in performing Yanjnas according to Vedic rites, recognizing Siva as the Lord of the Yanjna†. The father left for Sirkali while the child remained at Thiruvavaduthurai.

THE SPIRITUAL VIRTUE OF HIS HYMNS

After some time, the Pilliar left Thiruvavaduthurai, and having visited Tirukkolampam and other places‡ arrived at Tharumapuram. This place having been the birth place of the lutist's mother, his relations welcomed the Pilliar and worshipped him. The lutist informed them of the privilege granted to him by the Pilliar in allowing him to play his hymns on the lute, and was complimented by them for his skill. The lutist got nervous at this compliment, and begged of the Pilliar to improvise a hymn that would baffle his skill, so that he might convince the people of the mistaken idea they had formed of him. The Pilliar worshipped God and extemporized the hymn "மாதர்மடப்பிடியும்" in order to make the people realize the fact

* The Puranam mentions 15 names.

† The Pilliar had evidently in view the fate of the yanjna performed by Daksha without recognizing the Divinity of Siva. —

‡ The Puranam mentions the names of 10 places.

that the tunes of spiritual hymns are beyond the grasp of the science of music—both vocal and instrumental. The lutist found it altogether impossible to play the hymn on his lute. He got alarmed and fell down at the feet of the Pilliar and worshipped him. Rising up from the ground, he raised his lute over his head to be dashed on the ground saying "Because of this lute, I made the audacious attempt to play on it the tunes of my Lord's hymns." The Pilliar stopped him, and getting the lute in his hand, said "Why should you break the lute ? Divine grace cannot be measured by lutes. How could we measure by our feeble endeavours the tunes of spiritual hymns which are even beyond the grasp of our mind ? Now get hold of the lute; try as far as you can to play on it the tunes of the hymns in praise of our Lord Siva". Thirunilakandar worshipped the Pilliar, received the lute and placed it over his head.

Shortly after this incident, the Pilliar left Tharumapuram for Thirunallaru. He worshipped Siva in the temple of that place and improvised the hymn "போகமார்த்தபூண்முலையாள்" the tune of which he intended to be played by the lutist on his lute. Getting out of the temple, he asked Thirunilakandapperumpanar to play the hymn on his lute and helped him in the work by keeping time with his own cymbals. The lutist was quite able to play the hymn—and this pleased the Pilliar very much.

MEETING THIRUNILANAKKAR, ANOTHER SAINT

The Pilliar left Thirunallaru and proceeded to Thiruchchattamankai where he was welcomed by Thirunilanakkar, another canonized saint of his time. The Pilliar went to the local temple along with Thirunilanakkar and worshipped the presiding Deity. He was entertained by Thirunil•nakkar as his guest that night. On the following morning, he went to the temple again and improvised a decad in which he referred to the devotion of Thirunilanakkar.

MEETING SIRUTTONDAR, ANOTHER SAINT

The Pilliar took leave of Tirunilanakkar and proceeded on his journey visiting on the way Tirunakaikkaronam and Kilvelur.

Siruttondanayanar * who was then at Tiruchchenkattankudi, having heard that the Pilliar was travelling that way, hastened up to welcome him and took him to his place. The Pilliar worshipped the God of the local temple known as Kanapathichcharam and improvised a Pathigam, in which he referred to the devotion of Siruttondar. During his stay in the place, the Pilliar was the guest of Siruttondar, Shortly after, he proceeded to Tirumarukal and remained there for some time serving God in the temple of the place.

RESTORING TO LIFE A MERCHANT, WHO DIED OF SNAKE POISON

During the Pilliar's stay at Tirumarukal, a merchant who travelled with a maiden girl through this place, slept for the night in a *Madam* behind the temple. While asleep, he was bitten by a snake and was found dead. The maiden who accompanied him was very much alarmed and distressed, and she raised a cry and rolled on the ground; but without touching the dead body. Medical aid was of no avail. About dawn the following morning, the maiden in her forlorn condition, looked in the direction of the temple tower and cried aloud most pathetically with her hands joined over her head:—"O! Lord! who converted poison into ambrosia for the purpose of saving the celestials! O Thou granary of grace that restored Manmatha to life for the sake of Rati, his widow,! Thou of lotus feet that kicked Yama for Markandeya! O Paramesvara who presides at Tirumarukal! May Thou bestow Thy grace on me and restore this man to life and recover me from the sea of grief into which I have been plunged." This cry fell on the ears of Tirugnanasambanther who was going to the temple for worship, and moved his heart. He approached her with his followers and said "Be not afraid! Tell me what has happened" The maiden, with tears streaming from her eyes, fell and worshipped at the feet of Pilliar in a pitiful state and began her story as follows:— "My Lord! My father, a native of Vaippur had seven daughters of whom I am the youngest. All my six elder sisters were promised one after the other to this man by my father, but they were eventually married to others who gave him large sums of money. As my father had

* One of the sixty three canonized saints. He was so much devoted to the devotees of Siva that he killed his only son in order to feed Siva when he went to him in the disguise of a devotee.

greatly disappointed this man, I resolved to marry him, and accompanied him. But alas! this man is dead, bitten by a snake, and I am like a ship-wrecked passenger in the mid ocean! My Lord! Thy arrival has given me relief". The Pilliar invoked the grace of Siva by the Pathigam "சடையாயெனுமால்" and the merchant was restored to life immediately. He stood up and worshipped his benefactor. The Saiva devotees who witnessed the miracle shouted out in applause. The maiden was delighted beyond measure and worshipped the saint falling at his feet. The Pilliar had their marriage solemnized at the place and gave them leave to start.

He remained at Tirumarukal for some time, and at the request of Siruttondar, intended to start for Tiruchchenkattankudi again. With a view to leave Tirumarukal for Tiruchchenkattankudi, he went with his followers to the temple and worshipped the God there. The God appeared to the Pilliar in the form that He assumes at Tiruchchenkattankudi. The Pilliar was immensely delighted and praised the grace of God by the Pathigam "அங்கமும் வேதமுமோதுநாவர்" and remained in the place giving up his idea of going to Tiruchchenkattankudi.

MEETING TIRUNAVUKKARASAR AGAIN

After spending some time at Tirumarukal, he took leave of Siruttondar and proceeded on his pilgrimage visiting several temples in the way, and arrived at Tiruppukalur. Here he was received and worshipped by Murukanayanar * and other devotees, with whom he went to the temple and worshipped the presiding Deity. He was the guest of Murukanayanar at his madam. During his stay at Tiruppukalur, the Pilliar visited Varththamanichcharam and hymned a Pathigam in praise of the God of the temple, and referred therein to the merits of Murukanayanar. About this time, Tirunavukkarasar and his followers were proceeding towards Tiruppukalur and our Pilliar was very glad when he heard the news. He went with his followers to meet his senior contemporary beyond the limits of Tiruppukalur. On meeting, they worshipped each other and exchanged words of greeting. In reply to an enquiry made by the Pilliar about the festivities at Tiruvarur, Appar † improvised a Pathigam describing the celebrity

* Another of the sixty-three canonized saints.

† Tirunavukkarasar was generally known by the name of Appar (Father).

of the *Thiruvathirai* festival. Pilliar made up his mind to visit Thiruvarur, and promised Appar to spend some time with him on his return. Appar left for Tiruppukalur, and Sampanthar for Tiruvarur. On his way he visited Tiruvitkudivirattam and arrived at Thiruvarur. He worshipped Vanmikanather * and hymned a *Pathigam* in His praise and remained in the place for some time. During his stay at the place, he served at every *pooja* time the Deity of the temple known by the name of Araneri. He also visited the temples at Thiruvalivalam, Thirukkolily and other places and returned to Thiruvarúr. After some time, he desired to see Thirunavukkarasar and left Thiruvarur and arrived at Thiruppukalúr visiting Thiruppalanam in the way. At Tiruppukalur, he was received by Appar, Murukanayanar and others with whom he went to the temple and worshipped the God. After worship, he took up his residence in the *Madam* belonging to Murukanayanar. Here he was joined by Tirunilanakkar and Siruttondar.

After a few days, Pilliar and Appar started on their pilgrimage to visit other shrines, instructing Murukanayanar to remain in the place and Siruttondar and Tirunilanakkar to return to their native places. Instead of travelling in the palanquin, Pilliar walked along with Appar, the palanquin having been carried behind him. Appar having requested the Pilliar to get into the palanquin given to him by Lord Siva, Pilliar said that he would follow Appar wherever he would go ahead of him with his followers. Appar complied with the wishes of the Pilliar and acted as suggested by him so long as they travelled together. Appar walked ahead along with their followers and got to Thiruvampar. Abiding by the instructions given by Lord Siva, Sampanthar got into his palanquin and proceeded to Tiruvampar having come to know that Appar had gone there. He worshipped Siva in the temple known as Makalam, improvised a Pathigam and stayed in the place together with Appar. He also visited the great temple built by Kochchenkad cholanayanar † and extemporized a *Pathigam* in which he referred to the merits of the founder of the temple. He then proceeded to Thirukkadavur with

* The Linga in the temple is in the shape of an ant-hill, and hence this name. The temple is therefore known as திருமூலஸ்தலம்.

† Kochchenkad Cholanayanar is another of the canonized saints.

Appar, and was received there by Kunkilyakkalayanayanar * and other devotees with whom he went to the temple called Thiruvirattanam, hymned a *Pathigam* in praise of the God and remained in the place as a guest of Kunkilyakkalayanayanar. During his stay at this place he visited Thirukkadavur Mayanam. Starting again on his journey, he visited Tiruvakkur, Tirumiyachchur and Thiruppampuram and arrived at Thiruvilimilalai. Here he worshipped the God of the temple with a *Pathigam* in His praise, and took up his residence in a *Madam* Appar having gone to another *Madam*. From here, they both visited Penuperunturai and Thilataippati. While the Pilliar was remaining at Thiruvilimilalai, the Brahmins of Sirkali went to the place being anxious to see the Pilliar. They were received by the local Brahmins with whom they went to the temple for worship and repaired to the *Madam* occupied by the Pilliar. They worshipped the Pilliar and requested him to return with them to Sirkali. The Pilliar acquiesced in and said that he would start the following day getting leave of the God of Tiruvilimilalai. The Brahmins of Tiruvilimilalai entertained the Brahmins of Sirkali. That night, the God of Tiruvilimilalai appeared to Sambanthar in his vision and said that He would present to his view, in the *Vimanam* of the local temple, the form that He assumes at Sirkali. The Pilliar woke up and went to the temple and found the God in the same form as that at Sirkali. Pilliar was highly delighted at this miraculous incident, and sang the praise of God by an interrogatory *Pathigam* † which commenced with the word "மைம்மருபூங்குழல்". He told his countrymen that it was the will of God that he should visit other shrines sacred to Him and sing His praise, and it therefore pleased Him to present to his view in the local temple the form that He assumed at Sirkali——and that he cannot therefore go with them to Sirkali as agreed upon. The Brahmins had therefore to leave Tiruvilimilalai without taking the Pilliar with them.

OBTAINING FAMINE RELIEF

During the stay of the two saints at Tiruvilimilalai the place was visited by famine, the river Cauveri having dried up owing to prolonged

* This is another canonized saint.

† A decad with questions.

drought. All living beings suffered, and the devotees of Siva were themselves affected by the famine. This grieved the two saints who were, however, hopeful that those who are devoted to Siva and who rub the sacred ashes over their body would not be subject to any hardship. Siva appeared to them in a vision and said "Although you would not be affected by change of time, your followers have to be given relief. We will, therefore place a gold coin for each of you in the Eastern and Western altars of the temple". Pilliar woke up, praised the grace of God, and went with Appar to the temple where he found a gold coin on the Eastern altar. He picked it up with feelings of thankfulness and praised the grace of God. He had publication made by beat of tom-tom inviting Saiva devotees to the *Madam* where they were all supplied with sumptuous meals consisting of rice, curry, ghee and milk. Appar himself made a similar use of the coin placed for him on the Western altar. Pilliar having noticed one day that devotees were fed earlier at Appar's *madam* than at his, inquired from his servants the cause of their delay and found that it was due to the fact that discount was demanded for the change of the coin taken by them, while the coin taken by the servants of Appar was readily changed without payment of any discount. Pilliar made out at once that the difference was due to the merits of the manual services rendered by Appar and desired to get a good coin himself by singing the praise of God. He went to the temple the next morning and improvised a *Pathigam*, the first stanza of which ran as follows:—

வாசிதீரவே—காசுநல்கிடீர்
மாசின்மிழலையீர்—ஏசலில்லையே.

(Thou of Milalai—grant me coin
Discount none—none to find fault.)

Henceforth, he got good coins which when taken to the market were accepted readily, and there was no delay in purchasing the necessary provisions and feeding the devotees. Numerous devotees were fed daily in the *Madams* occupied by the two saints. After some time, there was rain all over the country and there was a good crop of several food grains; and all living beings of the place were relieved of their distress.

OPENING THE DOOR OF THE VETHARANIAM TEMPLE.

After spending some time at Thiruvilimilalai, the two saints resumed their journey, visited Thiruvanjiam and other places * and arrived at Vetharaniam. They went round the temple and stood in front of the main door of the sanctuary. Since the time the God was worshipped by the Vedas † at a very remote period, and the doors of the sanctuary closed by them, they remained fastened, and the temple priests had therefore to make an opening in the wall through which they had access into the sanctuary for their *poojah* cermony. The two saints having been told of this fact, Sambanthar asked Appar to hymn a *Pathigam* invoking the grace of God for the opening of the doors, so that they may be enabled to worship the God through the direct way. The hymning of a *Pathigam* was accordingly taken up by Appar, but there was delay in the opening of the doors. He addressed the God in the last verse and said "இரக்கமொன்றிலீர்" (Thou hast no mercy) and the doors opened immediately; and the two saints fell on the ground and worshipped the God, while the devotees shouted in ecstasy. The saints were absorbed in the Bliss of God for some time, and they got up, entered the temple and worshipped the God and improvised hymns. They spent long hours in the temple and got out very reluctantly. When they came out, Appar requested the Pilliar to improvise a *Pathigam* so that the doors may be closed and be fit for use as usual by the temple priests. Pilliar started the Pathigam "சதுரம்மறைதான்" and as soon as the first stanza was completed the doors were closed. ‡ The saints rejoiced immensely at the miraculous scene, and praised the God and worshipped Him again. Pilliar completed the *Pathigam*, and the devotees who witnessed the incident fell at the feet of the two saints and worshipped them with tears of true love streaming from their eyes, and the hairs of their body standing on their ends. From that day forth the doors were opened and closed by the temple priests as they wanted.

* The names of 16 places are given in the Puranam.

† By Vedas the Vedic Deities are referred to. This fact explains the name of the temple *Vetharanium* the jungle of the Vedas.

‡ This incident is a strong proof in support of the Divine influence of the Tamil language, and of the relative merits of the *Vedas* and the *Thevarams*.

When the two saints retired to their respective residence, Appar was thinking over the merits of Sambanthar. It struck him that because Sambanthar had realized the Grace of God to a large extent and embodied in his hymns the sense of the Vedas revealed by God, he could get expressions of Grace manifested like God Himself, while the contrast between the *Vedas* and the sayings of devotees of his own type was immense: and this, he thought, was the reason why the doors of the temple were opened after some delay at his hymns, and closed instantaneously at the hymns of Sambanthar. While Appar was asleep that night, Siva appeared to him in a vision and said "We will be at Vaimur: follow us" and walked ahead. Appar woke up and followed the God with anxiety; but He could not be approached. Siva caused a temple to appear in the vicinity, and entered into it, as if He would present Himself to the view of Appar in the temple. Appar followed the God into the temple, and in the meantime Sambanthar also arrived at the spot having heard that Appar was going to Vaimur. The Lord exhibited His spiritual dance to the two saints with His consort Parvati on His side. The Pilliar witnessed the dance and improvised a *Pathigam*. From there, they went to Vaimur, and after spending some time there, returned to Vetharaniam and remained there serving the God.

RECONVERTING THE KING OF MADURA.

As a fruit of his previous Karma, the king of Madura was taken up by the pernicious teachings of the Jains who believed in the eternity of this world and in the divinity of *Arugan*. He relinquished the true religion of Siva and embraced Jainism; and his subjects also followed his example consistently with the saying "As the King is so the subjects are." The Jain heretics increased in number all over the country and they could be seen everywhere with bald head and foul mouth, with pea-fowl feather and a water vessel in a hoop, their body full of dirt as their mind was, clad in mats with no cloth in their loins, and addicted to the practice of eating in a standing posture. Although the Vedic and the Saivite creeds suffered and the religion of the Jains prospered, the Queen Mankayarkkarasy (a daughter of the Chola King), and the Minister Kulachchirai, adhered to the true faith, as a result not only of their own merits in their previous

births, but of those of the king himself and of the people in general. These two highly spiritual souls felt very sorry for the people of their country, and their religious conviction was kept secret from the king. Situated as they were in such a position, they heard of the many virtues of Thirugnanasambanthar, and of his visit to, and stay at, Vetharaniam. They were exceedingly glad when they heard the good news, and prompted evidently by the past merits of of the people of the place, they deputed some of their attendants to go to the Saint.

The deputation arrived at Vetharaniam and proceeded to the *Madam* occupied by the Pilliar. They had their arrival reported to the Pilliar, and with his permission, were taken in. They worshipped the Pilliar and stood in his presence with their hands joined over their heads. The Pilliar made inquiries of the Queen and the Minister, and the visitors informed him that they were in the best of health, and availed themselves of this opportunity to lay before the Pilliar the object of their mission. They addressed him reverentially and said :—

"Gracious saviour of the seven regions! Preceptor of the true Saiva faith!! The Pandian King and his subjects have fallen victims to the evil teachings of the Jains and have given up the sacred emblem of our religion and have become converts to the Jain faith, The Queen and the Minister were sorely grieved at this state of things, but having heard of your holiness's arrival at Vetharaniam, have sent us here to submit their grievence to you."

The devotees who were in the company of the Pilliar begged of him to proceed to Madura and to put down the Jain heresy, and recover the King to his original faith. Pilliar entertained the prayer favourably. He went to the temple for worship along with Appar, and after the worship was over, they both sat for a while below the tower. Sambanthar informed Appar of the message he received from the Queen Pandimathevi and the Minister Kulachchirai, and expressed his inclination to proceed to Madura.

Appar, however, was not in favour of the idea. He addressed the Pilliar and said "Swamy! Thou art a child: the treachery of the Jains knows no bounds. The influence of the planets is not very

fovourable to you at present. In the circumstances, it would not be advisable to undertake the mission just now."

Pilliar, however, was confident that no danger would befall him so long as Lord Siva dwells in his heart; and he improvised the *Pathigam* "வேயுறு தோளிபங்கன்" * to counteract the planetary influence over him. Appar was satisfied after he had heard the *Pathigam*, and he himself wanted to accompany the Pil iar to Madura. But the Pilliar dissuaded him from doing so very respectfully, and Appar could not have acted against the wish of the Pilliar. Pilliar got into the temple again, worshipped the God with hymns, got leave of Him and started on his journey. He took leave of Appar as well, in winning words, and got into his palanquin uttering *Sri Panchadchara* and fixing his mind on the form of Siva daubed with sacred ashes † On his way he visited Agattianpalli and othe temples, ‡ and got into the Pandian territory. Here he visite Thirukkodunkunram and neared Madura.

The Jains residing in the eight hills were very much troubled with evil dreams and omens portending danger, and they therefore assembled at Madura for deliberation. They informed the king of the evil prognostics, and were very disconsolate as they anticipated danger. The Queen and the Prime Minister had on the contrary several signs of future happiness and they were hopeful that their religion would be restored to its original glory while the religion of the Jains would be swept out of their land. While they were so felicitous, the news was conveyed to them of the coming in of Gnanasambanthar. The Queen was immensely glad when she heard the news and she rewarded profusely the people who conveyed her the glad tidings. She directed the Minister to proceed at once and receive the saint. The Minister with due obeisance to the Queen, said "This will be of great service to the king as well" and hurried up to the boundary limit of the town to receive the Pilliar.

* Siva rubs ashes on his body to set an example to the living souls and at the same time to remove their sins.

† This *Pathigam* is largely made use of now by people who suffer under evil stars.

‡ The Puranam mentions the names of five places.

The Queen in the meanwhile went to the temple accompained by her attendants, and after worshipping the Deity, awaited the arrival of the Pilliar.

Gnanasambanthar, the spiritual luminary that dispelled the dark clouds of alien faiths, arrived at Madurai seated in the palanquin of pearls which was symbolic of Divine Grace itself, and under the shadow of the precious umbrella presented by Lord Siva, amidst the trumpets of the four * kinds of musical instrument, the chanting of the Vedas by numerous Brahmins with proper accents † and the deafening cheers of "Hara! Hara!" by the large crowd of Saiva devotees. The big procession of people ‡ whose body was resplendent with sacred ashes looked like the march of the meritorious deeds of the whole world proclaiming the downfall of Jainism and the promulgation of the religion of Siva. The pearl-laid musical pipes announced the arrival of the Pilliar in the words. "The Lion that destroys foreign creeds is come! The Lion that destroys foreign creeds is come!!" The gentle wind from the south west welcomed the Pillaiyar while many of the devotees, with tears of love and piety streaming from their eyes, and the hairs of their body standing on their ends, danced in ecstacy. While the Pillaiyar whose form was Divine Bliss itself personified was thus moving towards the town, the melodious music that proceeded from the procession fell into the ears of Kulachchirai Nayanar. His joy knew no bounds. He fell flat on the ground and worshipped the Pilliar. Rising from the ground he walked towards the Pilliar with his hands joined over his head, while the hairs of his body stood on their ends. When he saw at a distance the large crowd of devotees forming the procession, the minister fell on the ground again and worshipped them. He then went up to them in a state of ecstasy and fell on the ground a third time, like a tree severed from its trunk, and remained in that position having lost himself altogether. The devotees themselves worshipped the minister, and finding that he did not rise

* The four kinds of musical instruments are; (1) instruments made of skin (2) wind instruments, (3) stringed instruments and (4) instruments made of metal.

† The accents are known as *uthaththam*, *anuthaththam* and *svarisayam* and the meanings of the vedic terminology and phraseology largely depend on those accents.

‡ The retinue of the Pilliar are said to have been 16,000 in number.

from the ground, went up to the Pilliar and informed him of the minister's condition. Pilliar whose love towards fellow creatures was unbounded, got down from his palanquin at once, and with his face blooming with grace, hurried up to Kulachchirai Nayanar and raised him with his sacred hands. The minister who enjoyed the rare privilege of being touched by the hands of the Pilliar, evidently as a result of the meritorious deeds of his previous birth, was immersed in the flood of grace that flowed from the face of the Pilliar and in the torrents of tears that streamed from his own eyes. He stood in front of the Pilliar with his hands joined over his head, his words faltering, his body quivering and the hairs of his body standing on their ends Pilliar bestowed his gracious look on the minister and said, "Thou devoted to Siva! His grace on you and Mankayarkarasyar is apparent" The minister who had the rare honour of being so addressed by the Pilliar, worshipped him and said "O Thou the fruit of our penance! O Thou mount of grace !! O Thou Light of consummate wisdom !!! Our past security and our future happiness are all due to thy present visit which has vouchsafed us the grace at all times. Our king and his subjects can now be said to have been recovered from the delusion of Jainism and blessed with the boon of shining in the splendour of the sacred ashes. The Queen has been greatly delighted when she heard of thy visit to this place, and she has directed me to receive thee and worship thy feet" Pilliar replied in kind words.

While they were thus engaged in conversation, the tower of the temple was sighted, and the attention of the Pilliar was drawn to the fact by his attendant devotees. He fell on the ground at the spot and worshipped the tower* and extemporised the *Pathigam* ;" மங்கையர்க்கரசி" each stanza of the hymn ending with the words "ஆலவாயாவதுமிதுவே" He referred to the merits of the Queen and the Minister in the *Pathigam*. On approaching the temple, he worshipped the tower again, entered into the temple, and after making a round of the holy precincts, got to the Divine presence in company with Kulachchirai Nayanar. The Pilliar worshipped Sokkanather† falling

* The tower of a temple is said to be a *lingam* itself (தூலலிங்கம்)

† Sokkanather is the name of the god of Madura.

on the ground several times following the formulas of *ashtankam* and *panchankams.* * He then improvised a hymn with tears flowing from his eyes and his body quivering with emotions of reverence and love. The hymn having been completed, he retraced his steps to the front gate of the temple. The Queen who stood aside by the side of the gate when the Pilliar entered in, now stepped forward with her hands joined over her head and was introduced by the Minister to the Pilliar. The Pilliar quickened his pace towards her when the Queen fell at his feet and worshipped him. Full of grace, the Pilliar raised her with his sacred hands and blessed her. Feeling fully confident that her hopes were realized, the Queen with tears flowing from her eyes and her body quivering, addressed the Pilliar and said, "Ah! the penance performed by my master and myself!" The Pilliar addressed her in return and said, "Though in the midst of heretics, you are devoted to Siva; I have come to see you". He then gave her leave and sent her to her residence, and left the temple with his attendants. The devotees who served in the temple came in a body and worshipped the Pilliar and said "O! Grand Luminary of wisdom! What shall we say of our penance that brought thee to this place whereby the darkness of Jainism may be dispelled"? Pilliar blessed them all and left the temple and took up his residence in a *Madam* prepared for him by Kulachchirai Nayanar who treated the saint and his party on the order of the Queen.

The Jains got greatly alarmed at the arrival of the Pillaiyar, and they all assembled together that day after sunset. They got very much excited when they heard the *Thevarams* recited by Saiva devotees at the *Madam* occupied by the Pilliar. They resolved at once to inform the king of what had happened and they went up to him in a body. Noticing their dejected spirit and anxiety, the the king inquired of them sympathetically the object of their visit. "Maharaj!" said they, "we have seen this day Saiva Brahmins coming into the town." The king told them that he had himself heard of their arrival, and asked them angrily who those Brahmins

* *Ashtankam* is worship on the grand with eight of the limbs of the body touching the ground; and *Panchankam* is worship with five limbs touching the ground.

were and what their object was. The Jains in reply informed the king that a Brahmin boy of Sirkali who is alleged to have received divine knowledge from Siva had come to Madura in a palanquin of pearls accompanied by a large number of followers with the object of defeating them (the Jains) in disputation. The king got very much annoyed, and asked them what should be done. The Jains proposed to send fire by their magical skill to the *Madam* occupied by the Pilliar.—this they said would drive the boy out of the town. The king approved of the proposal and directed them to go and carry it out at once. Dismissing the Jains, the king retired to bed with heavy heart in gloomy silence. The Queen who entered the chamber a short while after having noticed that her master was very much dejected, inquired of him the cause of his melancholy spirit and was told of the unpleasant news carried by the Jains. The Queen cheered him up by telling him that he need not lose his spirit on that account, but that he should abide by the result of their disputation and should embrace the religion of the party that wins. The Queen then returned to her apartment full of hopes and informed Kulachchirai Nayanar, of what had happened, when he went there. "We have been blessed to day with the visit of Tirugnanasambanthar," said the minister with his hands clasped "I cannot say what the diabolical Jains will now do." The Queen herself got nervous and said "The Jains are experts in doing treacherous deeds; but if any harm is done to Tirugnanasambanthar we will put an end to our life."

The Jains who practise villainy under the guise of penanace, muttered the *mantras* of their religion in order to set fire to the Pilliar's *madam*. The *Mantras* had no effect. Would these *Mantras* have any effect in places that are blessed even with the sight of those in whose lips are the *Panchadcharam*? The Jains got very much disappointed and discomfited, and they were afraid that if the king happened to know of their failure, he would not only pay no regard to them, but even deprive them of all chances of their future prospects. They therefore took some fire and set it on the back roof of the *Madam*. When the fire blazed, the attendants of the Pilliar raised an alarm and put it out at once. Having made out that the mischief was caused by the Jains, the attendants

approached the Pilliar and informed him of what had happened. The Pilliar was sorry that such a mischief was done to the *Madam* where those devoted to Siva were sleeping. Although the act was intended to harm him, he felt for the devotees, and their situation gave him great anxiety. The king having been responsible for this evil, Pilliar got very much annoyed and started the *Pathigam* "செய்யனே திருவாலவாய்" intending to direct the fire back to the king, the intention having been enbodied in the words "அமணர்கொளுவுஞ்சுடர், பையவேசென்றுபாண்டியற்காகவே" (Let the fire set by the Jains proceed *slowly* and get to the Pandya) The word *slowly* was used by the Pilliar purposely as he wanted not to deprive the Queen of her nuptial ornament,* and as the king's minister was devoted to Siva. Although the king was responsible for the action, he was destined to revert to his original faith, and he had the merits of his previous birth that entitled him to be cured of his illness for that purpose by the touch of the sacred hands of the Pilliar and by the rubbing of holy ashes by him. The *Pathigam* having been completed with these various facts in view, the heat of the fire got into the kings' body.

After sunrise, the Queen and the minister came to know of the treacherous act of the Jains and were very much alarmed and excited. They thought that they must surely end their life as they were responsible for the Pilliar's visit to the land of these miscreants. They however learnt subsequently that the *madam* was not in any way hurt; but the Queen had her misgivings as regards the ultimate result of this diabolical act. While she was engrossed in a thought on this subject, her attendants approached her and informed her that the king was suffering from high fever. The Queen got excited and hurried up to the king. The minister himself followed the Queen. The condition of the king was very bad and the treatment of the royal physicians could not give him any relief. The temperature rose so high that the king lost his consciousness and lay down speechless. When the Jains heard of the illness they themselves ran up to the palace heaving and panting. Not knowing the real

* If the King would die, the Queen would become a widow and would not be entitled to wear the nuptial ornament.

cause of the king's illness, they muttered their *Mantras* and grazed his body with their pea-fowl feather.* The feathers and their ribs got scorched by the heat of the fever and dropped down emitting sparks. Feeling aghast at the intensity of the heat they sprinkled over the king's body water from the vessel that they used to carry with them in a hoop, and muttered "Aruga! Do thou save! Aruga! Do thou save.!" The water only helped the heat like ghee poured above a blazing fire. Unable to bear the heat, the king bade the Jains to clear out and became unconcious again. The Queen got very much alarmed and exclaimed to the minister "Has the evil done last night to Tirugnanasambanthar so ended.?" The minister with due obeisance fully endorsed her view and said that the illness would only get worse if these people would take upon themselves to cure it. The Queen and the minister then bowed to the king and said, "This fever is the result of the evil intended by the Jains to Tirugnanasambanthar. Their sorcery will only increase your suffering. If Tirugnanasambantha Murthy Nayanar will only throw a gracious glance at you, not only this ailment, but the ailments of all your births will themselves be cured." The sacred name of Tirugnanasambanthar having given the king some relief, he was able to realize that the doings of the Jains only tended to help the disease, and he asked his wife and the minister to get down Tirugnanasambanthar, and said that he would take the side of those that would cure him.

The queen was very glad at the king's resolve, and she proceeded at once in a palanquin, accompanied by her attendants, to the *Madam* where the Pilliar remained, the minister having preceded her on horse-back. They had their arrival reported to the Pilliar and were eventually taken in. When they got to the presence of the Pilliar, they expressed their horror at the evil attempted by the Jains to his *Madam*, and with tears is their eyes, fell at his feet. Their words faltering, their body shivering, they got hold of the Pillar's sacred feet and rolled on the ground in a state of half consciousness. The Pilliar raised them with his sacred hands and consoled them. But they could not be consoled. He thereupon asked them if any

* The Jain monks always carried with them a tuft of pea-fowl feather and a small water vessel placed in a hoop.

calamity had befallen them. "We were very much troubled" they said "when we heard of the felonious act of the Jains to your *Madam* last night, but feeling assured that their act would have no effect on you, we were relieved of our anxiety; their deed, however, has taken the form of a severe type of fever and has got into the king's body. All endeavours on the part of the Jains to cure the disease have proved futile and made the case worse. If your Holiness will overcome the Jains in the presence of the king, his life and our life will be equally saved." Pilliar cheered them up and said that he would in the course of the day defeat the Jains who were devoid of true knowledge, and would make the king rub sacred ashes to their great delight. The Queen and the Minister worshipped the Pilliar very much satisfied and said, "Blessed as we are with the visit of your Holiness to this place, what is there that we cannot get?"

Pilliar left the *Madam* and proceeded to the temple with his followers and extemporized the *Pathigam* "காட்டுமாவதுரித்து" in order to find out whether it was the will of God * that he should encounter the Jains to uphold the cause of his religion. Having ascertained the will of God, the Pilliar improvised another *Pathigam* "வேதவேள்வியை" invoking the grace of God for defeating the Jains and for establishing the true faith † The Grace of God having been assured, he took leave of the God, got out of the temple, through the main gate, mounted his palanquin and proceeded to the residence of the king under the shade of the umbrella of pearls, surrounded by his numerous followers and amidst the sounding of various musical instruments including the pipe of pearls presented by Lord Siva. The Queen followed him in another palanquin, while the Minister walked in front of the procession.

The Minister went ahead and informed the king of the coming in of the Pilliar. This gave him some relief and he ordered a seat wrought with gems to be placed by the side of his bed in the direction where he laid his head. The king directed the Minister to go back and receive the Pilliar.

* Religions are all promulgated in the world by the grace of God according to the capacity and Karmic effect of the souls. The Pilliar therefore wanted to ascertain the will of God.

† Pilliar depended fully on the grace of God and not on his own skill and that was why he invoked the grace of God.

The Jains who noticed the attitude of the king addressed him and said "Maharaj! You must safeguard the interests of your own religion. Now that you have invited Sambanthar, you must associate us also with him in healing your illness, and even if the cure is effected through him, the credit must be given to us as well". The time for the enjoyment of the merits of his previous birth having now come, the king told the Jains that he could not be partial, and that they should cure him with the help of their respective spiritual merits. The Jains did not know what to do.

The Pilliar who can only be compared to the merits of the whole Tamil land sprouting out in human form, arrived at the entrance of the palace He alighted from his palanquin and walked in, being led by the Minister and followed by the Queen. When the king saw the Pilliar, he showed him the seat placed for him by the side of his bed. The Pilliar took his seat to the great bewilderment of the Jains.

The sight of the Pilliar having given the king some further relief, he inquired of the Pilliar his native place. The Pilliar replied the king by the *Pathigam* "பிரமனூர் வேணுபுரம்" each stanzas of which ended with the words "கழுமலநாம் பரவூரே" (Kalumalam* is our native place.)

The prominence accorded to theI illiar having excited the jealousy of the Jains, they burst out into a harangue concealing their fear. Their eyes reddened with anger, they flocked round the Pilliar like black clouds collecting round the morning Sun. They started a controversy and shouted out their religious dogmas in order to overcome the Pilliar. Pilliar asked them to keep order and to state their dogmas exactly. The Jains grew more boisterous and collected round the Pilliar in larger numbers. The queen could not bear the conduct of the Jains and got very much vexed. She addressed the king and said " My Lord! Our *Swamy* is a small child; the Jains are too many: Let the *Swamy* cure your disease first; and the Jains can enter into a controversy with him afterwards. The king soothed her and ordered the Jains to prove the superiority of their religion by curing his disease with their spiritual merit. Pilliar

* Kalumalam is another name for Sirkali.

addressed the Queen and improvised the Pathigam "மானினேர் விழிமாதராய்" in which he cheered her not to be afraid of the Jains so long as the grace of the God of Tiruvalavai * was with him. When the *Pathigam* was completed, the king asked the Pilliar and the Jains to cure his illness in competition and said that the result will decide the question of their respective superiority. The Jains thereupon undertook the cure of the fever on the left side and left the right side to be cured by the Pilliar. They grazed the left side with their pea-fowl feather, only to see the temperature increase. Unable to bear the heat the king looked at the Pilliar. He extemporized the *Pathigam* "மந்திரமாவது நீறு" † and rubbed the right side with sacred ashes. The right side was cured instantly and became cool like a pool. The temperature on the left side rose doubly high and the heat affected the body of the Jains themselves. They got confused and confounded. Their pea-fowl feather and their own body having been scorched by the heat, they moved further and further from the king in order to escape the heat, and their conceipt itself left them. The king thereupon declared that the Jains were defeated and ordered them to stand out. He then addressed the Pilliar and said, "My gracious Lord who saved me as an object worthy of thy grace! Wouldst thou extend thy mercy to my left side as well"; and with these words he worshipped the Pilliar in his mind. Pilliar rubbed holy ashes on the left side also, and the king was fully cured. The Queen and the Minister fell at the feat of the Pilliar and worshipped him and exclaimed in ecstasy "Our king has been recovered from the sea of birth" ‡ The king got up from his bed and with his hands joined over his head exclaimed "I have been saved! I have been saved!! by the grace of Tirugaanasambanthar who cured me of my illness in the presence of the deceiptful Jains".

FIRE RENDERED INEFFECTIVE.

The power of the Pilliar's words having been clearly seen by the Jains in his hymns that cured the king, they thought it impossible to overcome him by talk, and wanted to have recourse to their

* Tiruvalavai is another name for Madurai.

† This *Pathigam* is considered even to-day to possess a good deal of mystical power.

‡ The Pandyan king having reverted to his original faith and become saiva devotee, he would have no more birth.

magical skill over fire and water. As, however, they originally intended to enter into a controversy with him, the Pilliar called upon them to state their religious dogmas briefly. They told him that it would be waste of time, and challenged him to establish the merits of his religion by palpable proofs. The king gave them a snub and said " You could not cure me of my illness, and what is the use of any more controversy ? ". The Jains interpreted the king's words literally, and said that there was hardly any use in a controversy and proposed to reduce their respective dogmas to writing and place it on fire—the victory to be decided by the power of the writing to resist fire. Before the king expressed his opinion in the proposal, Pilliar accepted the challenge and undertook to give effect to the proposal at once in the presence of the king. A fire was kindled as requested by the Pilliar, and as ordered by the king, on the very spot. Pilliar walked up to the side of the fire, worshipped the book containing his hymns with implicit confidence on the Divinity of Siva, placed the book for a while over his head, exclaiming solemnly " Siva is the God supreme," untied the book and passed its string through the leaves. The leaf that turned up contained the *Pathigam* " போகமார்த்த பூண் முலையாள் " in praise of the God presiding at Thirunallaru. Pilliar was very happy over the appropriateness of the *Pathigam*, removed the leaf from the book, and with the leaf in his hands improvised the *Pathigam* " தளிரிள வளரொளி " giving expression to the truth that the leaf would not in any way be hurt by fire. He then laid the leaf on the fire in the presence of the whole assembly to the great heart-burning of the Jains. As the leaf contained a *Pathigam* which embodied in it the great truth that Siva is the supreme God who embodies in His form the eight aspects * of nature, and who has on His left the Divine Mother whose breasts represent the two kinds of *Gnanam* † known as *Paragnanam* and *Aparagnanam* ‡ the leaf shone quite green in the flames. The

* The eight aspects are the five elements of nature, the sun, the moon and the soul.

† It is rather difficult to express the meaning of this word in English. We may call it *knowledge*, but it is much more than that. *Realization of truth* may convey the meaning to a certain extent.

‡ *Paragnanam* is the realization of truths beyond and *Aparagnanam* is that of the truth below.

Jains themselves placed on the fire the leaflet that contained their religious tenets doubting whether it would escape the fire. The leaflet was burnt to ashes and the Jains got mortified and crest-fallen. Sambanthar waited till the time allowed for the experiment was over, and then took the leaf out of the fire and put it back into his book, after exhibiting it to those assembled on the spot when it appeared much greener and fresher than before. The king who was very much struck at the miraculous incident, called on the Jains to shew their leaf. They got close to the fire in order to make a search but had to stand back as the heat was too powerful. On the order of the king the fire was extinguished with water, and the Jains found nothing but ashes and charcoal. In their anxiety and confusion they squeezed and scratched the ashes. The king was very much amused at their foolish act and told them with a smile "Go on make a thorough search." He then addressed them and said "You people who labour under an illusion mistaking an untruth for truth! You were defeated when you undertook to cure me of my illness; now that your leaf is not to be seen, perhaps you are not defeated!! You had better now go away."

COUNTERACTING THE CURRENT OF THE VAIKAI.

The Jains interpreted the king's sarcasm in a literal sense and said "we competed twice: we will try another chance; we may succeed in the third." The king refused to grant their request. Pilliar however asked them what they next proposed to do. They said that their respective religious tenets should be reduced to writing and placed in the river *Vaikai*, and added that the writing that would resist the current should be considered to belong to the true religion. The proposal was accepted by the Pilliar when the minister stepped forward and insisted on a stake. The Jains got very wild, and in their exasperation declared that they had better be impaled by the king if they would not succeed. The order was given at once by the king to proceed to the river side; wherupon Pilliar got into his palanquin and went up to the banks of the river. The king followed him on horseback, and the Jains themselves followed, their vehicle being their own confusion. The river was flowing with great force and the king asked the combatants to lay in the river their respective

writings. The Jains who were devoid of right knowledge, and who were therefore but chaffs among human beings laid in the river their leaflet in which the words " அத்திநாத்தி " * were inscribed, only to see that it was driven towards the sea by the current. The Jains ran along the banks for some distance, but the current having carried it away, it was lost to the sight. The Jains were mortified and felt sure that their fate was sealed. Concealing however their fear and anxiety, they told the Pilliar that the question could only be decided after his leaflet was also laid in the river. That grand Preceptor who purifies the souls of their *Malam* † and redeems them from the trammels of birth and death improvised the *Pathigam* " வாழ்கவந்தணர் " in order to impress the truth of Saivaism on the king and on others who were of his standard of maturity, ‡ the king having attained the stage of equanimity of actions and of release from the bondage of mala || because he was rubbed sacred ashes by the saintly Pilliar. The Pilliar reduced the *Pathigam* to writing and laid it in the river with his own hands. The leaf dashed against the current and splashed in the opposite direction, pointing out, as it were, the Divine truth to the whole world. The Pilliar having embodied in the *Pathigam* a benediction to the king in the words " வேந்தனுமோங்குக " § (Let the king himself become high) he was cured of his hunch."

When the Pilliar's leaflet split the water and dashed against the current, the celestials praised the Pilliar and showered forth flowers. The king lost himself in amazement while the Jains drooped their head alarmed and perplexed. The minister got on horseback and rode along the banks as swiftly as the wind in pursuit of the leaflet.

* This is the Jain fundamental *mantra* which means that God is a reality and at the same time an unreality and it is also a reality and unreality combined.

† *Malam* is the seed of evil that obstructs the view of the soul and is the main cause of Births and Deaths.

‡ It is when this *Malam* matures and its power gets weakened the soul is enabled to enjoy the grace of God.

|| Equanimity of actions and release from the bondage of mala are two essential stages for the final emancipation of the soul. When he attains the stage of equanimity of actions he views good deeds and bad deeds in the same light, as they both belong to the plane of limitation. And when this stage is reached the power of *mala* which is the main cause of limitation gets weakened and the soul is in a position to enjoy the special grace of God.

§ Because of his hunch the king was known as கூன்பாண்டியன்,

Pilliar extemporized another Pathigam "வன்னியுமத்தமும்" in order to stop the leaf. The leaf stopped near about a temple. The minister got into the water, picked up the leaf and got ashore very much rejoiced and placing the leaf on his head, he worshipped the God in the temple which is now known by the name of *Thiruvedakam* and returned to the Pilliar and worshipped him at his feet. He showed the leaf to the king and to those assembled on the spot. The devotees of Siva shouted "Hara! Hara" in ecstasy.

THE JAINS IMPALED

The king now gave order to his minister to have the Jains impaled, not only because they were defeated, but also because they intended to endanger the life of the Pilliar. Although the Pilliar cherished no ill—feeling towards the Jains, their attempt at setting fire to the *mudam* occupied by those devoted to Siva having been an offence of a very serious nature, and punishment of death having been provided in the *shastras* for such offences, he did not prevent the king from enforcing his lawful order. The zealous minister got stakes planted on a line and had eight thousand of the Jains impaled at the spot.

Pilliar offered sacred ashes to the king who worshipped the saint at his feet and received the ashes and rubbed it over his body. All the people of the Pandyan territory followed the king and took themselves to the rubbing of ashes. The king having been reconverted, the religion of the Jains received a fatal-blow, while Saivaism thrived and flourished all over. The reputation of Thirugnanasambanthar travelled far and wide.

Pilliar then got into his palanquin and proceeded in triumph to worship the God of Madurai. The King and the Queen followed the Pilliar full of praise in their mouth. The devotees accompanied the Pilliar proclaiming his greatness. Approaching the temple, Pilliar alighted from his palanquin and entered into the holy precincts followed by the royal party. He made a round of the inner courtyard and standing in front of the sanctuary extemporized the hymn "வீடலாலவாயிலாய்." The king worshipped the God and praised Him devoutly. "My Lord of Tiruvalavai" exclaimed he "How shall

I describe thy grace that gave me Tirugnanasambanthar to cure me of my illness and to redeem me from the mire of Jainism into which I had fallen through the intrigues of the Jains !" Pilliar left the temple very reluctantly and repaired to his *madam*. The royal party got leave of the Pilliar and retired to their residence. Pilliar stayed in the *Madam* with Thirunilakandapperumpanar and he referred to the grace bestowed on the lutist in his Pathigam, "ஓலமுகந்த திருக்கைவே" improvised in *yamaga* * verse.

PILLIAR LEAVES MADURA

The Pilliar spent some time at Madura serving Sokkanather, and being served by the royal household. While he was at Madura, his father came from Sirkali in order to know the result of his child's mission. On his arrival, he worshipped Lord Sokkanather in the temple and proceeded to the *Madam* where his son remained. The son was very much pleased when he heard of his father's arrival, and came out to meet him. The father rushed up and worshipped the child. The child himself worshipped the father; and the sight of his worldly father reminded him of his Divine father who granted him *Sivagnanam*. He extemporized a *Pathigam* immediately in praise of the God of Sirkali beginning with the words "மண்ணினல்லவண்ணம்."

A few days after, Pilliar left Madura and resumed his tour. The king, the queen and the minister accompanied the saint, as they could not afford to miss his company. The party visited Thirupparankunram and eight other places at each of which the Pilliar improvised hymns in praise of the presiding Deity. The party then proceeded towards Rameswaram and arrived at the place. The saint improvised a hymn in praise of the Deity at Rameswaram and remained in the place for some time. While he was at Rameswaram the Pilliar sang the praises of the God of Tirukkonasalam and Tirukketichcharam in Ilamandalam †.

* *Yamaga* is a species of poetry in which the four lines begin or end with the same words but with different meanings.

† These two temples are in Ceylon —Ilamandalam being the name by which Ceylon was known then.

These two temples were demolished by foreigners and a temple has since been built in the site of the latter.

The Pilliar resumed his journey again and visited Tiruvadanai and Tiruppunavayil and arrived at Manamelkudi, the native place of Kulachchira Naiyanar. He spent some time in the place and during his stay here he visited the temples in the neighbourhood.

PROPELLING A BOAT BY *THEVARAM.*

Pilliar now desired to visit the temples in the Chola country. The royal party wanted to accompany the saint on his pilgrimage in the Chola land as well; but the Pilliar dissuaded them from doing so and advised them to remain in their own land and propagate the religion of Siva. Being afraid to disregard the advice of the Pilliar, they worshipped him at his feet and took leave of him and returned to Madura where they remained propagating the Saiva religion not forgetting for a moment their Spiritual Saviour.

Pilliar got into the Chola land accompanied by his large retinue of attendants and devotees. He visited Thirukkalar, Thiruppathalichcharam and other places and arrived at Mullivaikkarai. The river which he had to cross having swollen, the ferry men were unable to ply their boats, and had gone away securing their boats on the banks. The temple at Thirukkollampoodoor on the other side of the river having appeared to his view, Pilliar was anxious to cross the river and worship the God. He had the boat untied and got into it with his attendant devotees. Instead of poles or oars, he used the power of his tongue to propel the boat and improvised the hymn "கொட்டமே கமழும்". By the grace of Siva, the boat got to the other side of the river. Pilliar got out of the boat with his attendants and proceeded to the temple and worshipped the God. After spending some time in the place, he thought of worshipping the God, the hymn in Whose praise withstood the fire. He proceeded to Thirunallaru and improvised the hymn "பாடகமெல்லடி" with questions and answers and spent a few days there.

CONVERTING BUDDHISTS

He then visited Thiruththelicheri and proceeded on. On his way he had to pass through Pothimangai, a Buddhistic country. The attendants of the Pilliar who were made aware of the fact made a great noise blowing their pipes and conches and shouting like the billows of a

sea. The pearl-laid-pipes announced the coming of the Pilliar. The Buddhists got very much vexed and jealous and collected together in large number and carried the news to Buddha Nandi and other leaders of their Buddhist creed. The information so carried, coupled with the noise made by Gnanasambanthar's party, penetrated into the ears of Buddha Nandi like a heated iron and exasperated him, so much so that he walked up directly to the Saivite throng and asked them angrily to stop the noise, and said that they could only make such a hubbub after defeating the Buddhists in a controversy. The Saivite devotees were very much offended by the impudence of the Buddhist leader, and thought that unless these heretics were checked at once they would try to maintain their conceipt. The devotees therefore approached the Pilliar and informed him of the conduct of Buddha Nandi. The information gave the Pilliar some unpleasantness, and he said "we will see how far he would be able to maintain his position when he meets us in a controversy". In the meantime the emanuensis of the Pilliar who could not bear the insult chanted the hymn

"புத்தர்சமண்கழுக்கையர்பொய்கொளாச்
சித்தத்தவர்க டெளிந்துதேறின
வித்தக நீறணிவார் வினைப்பகைக்
கத்திரமாவன வஞ்செழுத்துமே" *

and pronounced a curse that Buddha Nandi's head should be severed from his body by a thunderbolt. A bolt from the blue struck Nandi instantaneously and his head was found rolling on the ground. His followers got alarmed and dispersed in dismay. The Saiva devotees who saw the miracle and the condition of the Buddhists ran up to the Pilliar and informed him of what had happened. He approved the act of the scribe and instructed his followers to shout out "Hara! Hara!! † and there was a tremendous shout. The Buddhists who fled in fear were struck with astonishment at what had occurred, and they collected together again. Unable to say whether the miraculous

"உயிர்க்குண் மலமொடுக்க லாலேயுயிரு
ளுயிர்க்குமரனெனும் பேருண்டு"—சைவசமய நெறி

* This is the 10th verse of the Pilliar's "*Panchakkarappatigam.*"

† Hara is one of the names of Siva.

incident was the result of some fraud or of the real merits of the religion of Siva, they went to the crowd of the Saiva devotees with Sari Buddha at their head, and offered a challenge to meet them in a controversy instead of having recourse to magic. The Pilliar who overheard the harangue, got out of his palanquin cheerfully and got into a *madam* that stood close by. He took his seat in the hall surrounded by his followers and wanted the Buddhists to be brought before him. Some of the Pilliar's followers conveyed the message to the Buddhists and informed them that their challenge had been accepted by the Pilliar. Sari Buddha went up to the Pilliar accompanied by his co-religionists and stood near him. The Pilliar's emanuensis who wrought the miracle of severing Buddha Nandi's head worshipped the Pilliar and carried the controversy himself. He defeated them in the controversy by refuting their doctrines and worshipped again at the Pilliars' feet. The Buddhists acknowledged their defeat, and being convinced of the futility of their religion fell on the ground and worshipped the Pilliar. Pilliar expounded to them the doctrines of Saivaism and convinced them of its truth. Because they were privileged to receive the gracious look of the Pilliar, they all became Saivites and worshipped the Pilliar.

MEETS TIRUNAVUKKARASAR AGAIN

Pilliar left the place and visited Tirukkadavur where he remained sometime serving his Lord in the local temple. Having come to know that Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar was then at Thirup-punthuruthi, Pilliar was anxious to see him and started for that place. When Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar heard that Thirugnana-sambanthar was going to the place, he was greatly delighted and went up to receive and worship the Pilliar. People who were attracted by the sounding of the musical instruments in the Pilliar's procession collected in large number to have a view of the saint. Thirunavuk-karasar got into the crowd unnoticed, and took part in carrying the Pilliar's palanquin. On his arrival at Thiruppunthurthi, Pilliar in-quired from the people of the whereabouts of Tirunavukkarasar in the words "where has Appar gone to?". Appar who overheard the Pilliar exclaimed in ecstasy "Here I am, My Lord, enjoying the privilege of carrying your Lordship's palanquin". Pilliar got down from his

palanquin very much excited and worshipped Appar. Appar himself worshipped the Pilliar before he could worship Appar, and the devotees who witnessed the scene worshipped them both and shouted in ecstasy. Pilliar walked with Appar to Thiruppunthuruthi and remained in the place serving God in the temple. He related to Tirunavukkarasar his visit to Madura and spoke to him of the greatness of Pandimathevi and Kulachchirai. Appar in return related his pilgrimage in Tondamandalam. Appar took leave of the Pilliar and proceeded to Pandimandalam while Sambanthar travelled along the northern side of the river Cauveri visiting Tiruneittanam, Thiruvaiyaru Thiruppalanam and other places and arrived at Sirkali where he remained serving Tonyappar improvising hymns in His praise.

MALE PALMYRAH PALMS MADE TO BEAR FRUITS

After a long stay at Sirkali, Pilliar wanted to visit the temples in Tondamandalam. He got leave of Toniappar and started on his pilgrimage accompanied by his attendant devotees. The father himself having desired to go with him, Pilliar dissuaded him from doing so and asked him to remain at Sirkali and perform Vedic *yangnas.* Pilliar visited Chidamparam and other places * and got into Tondamandalam. He worshipped the God of Thiruvottur and remained there for sometime. One of the devotees attached to the temple had a grievance. He approached the Pilliar and said. "My Lord! Vanquisher of all heresies and upholder of the truth of Saivaism!! The palmyrah palms that I grow for the benefit of the temple, although luxuriant in growth, do not bear fruits, the trees being all of the male kind. The Jains ridicule me on account of my fruitless labour and ask me disdainfully if I could make them bear fruits. I solicit thy grace in this matter." Pilliar was moved, and he went at once to the temple and improvised the Pathigam "பூத்தொத்தாயினை". In the last verse of the *Pathigam*, he referred to the shrine in the words "குரும்பையாண் பனையீன்குலை ஒத்தூர்". (Ottur where male palmyrahs bear green fruits). The trees were at once seen with bunches of green fruits on their crown. The people who witnessed the miraculous change were taken by surprise. Pilliar blessed the devotee and said that the trees would thenceforth bear fruits

* The Puranam mentions the names of 12 places.

for the use of the temple. Jains who saw the miraculous incident fled from the country. Such of them, however, as were convinced of the merits of the Saiva religion embraced the religion. The palmyrah palms having been referred to by the Pilliar in his *Pathigam*, got released from the course of births, and attained emancipation at the end of their life *.

PILLIAR'S VISIT TO THIRUVALANKADU AND THIRUKKALATTI

After some time Pilliar left Thiruvottur and visited Thirumakaral and Thirukkurankanilmuttam and arrived at Kanchipuram. During his stay at Kanchipuram, he visited Tiruvekampam, Thirukkachchinerikkaraikkadu, Thiruvanekatankavatam and Thirukkachchimettali. Leaving Kanchipuram he visited Thirumalperu and four other places and proceeded to Thiruvalankadu, the sacred shrine in which Karaikalammayar † walked over with her head.

Pilliar was afraid to put his feet on the ground and slept that night in the adjoining village. The God of Tiruvalankadu appeared to him in his dream that night and asked him "Have you forgotten to sing me hymns?" The Pilliar woke up at once, and praised the God and improvised the hymn "துஞ்சவருவாரும்". When the devotees of his company saw him the next morning, he related to them the incident of the night. He then visited Tiruppasur, Thiruvenpakkam, Thirukkarikarai and other places and arrived at Tirukkalatti. He ascended the hill improvising the hymn "வானவர்கடானவர்கள்" in which he referred to the true love of Kannappar ‡. When he got to the temple on the top of the hill, he worshipped the God, and as if he had been rewarded with the fruit of his worship, he saw Kannappar, that image of love standing by the side of the Deity ||. With tears

* This discloses the occult power of the Pilliar's hymns. The trees having been brought in contact with the *Mantrams* of the Pilliar, they were released from their bondage.

† A female saint of great renown. Thiruvalankadu is the sacred place where Siva exhibited his dance to Kali.

‡ Kannappar was a saint of the hunter's tribe and belonged to a very remote period.

|| Kannappar's image is placed in the temple by the side of the Deity.

pouring down his eyes, he fell down and worshipped the hunter saint. His worship over, he got down from the hill and took up his residence in a *madam* where he remained for some time, serving Kalattinatar at the appointed times. As the prevailing language to the North and West of Kalatti was not Tamil, Pilliar did not proceed further; but from Kalatti he worshipped the God presiding in the temples at Uttara Kailasam, Thirukketharam, Thirukkokarnam, Thirupparuppatam, Indra Nilapparuppatham and other places and improvised hymns. Leaving Thirukkalatti, he visited Thiruvetkadu, Thiruvalithayam and other places and arrived at Thiruvottiyur where he spent some time serving the god in the temple.

RESTORING A MAIDEN TO LIFE FROM HER ASHES AND BONES

In a *Vaisya* family at Thirumailappur there was a millionaire by the name of Sivanesar who was warmly devoted to Siva and to those devoted to Him. He was very anxious to see that all alien faiths were swept out of the land. He heard of the miraculous incident of Thirugnanasambanthar having been fed with Divine milk, and of his contemptuous references in his *Thevaram*, to the alien faiths of Jainism and Buddhism, and got highly delighted and became very much attached to the sacred feet of the Pilliar. He made it his vocation to praise the Pilliar and to see that others praise him. Although he was possessed of considerable wealth, it was very unfortunate that he had no issue. Devoteed as he was to the devotees of Siva, he was feeding them regularly, and as a result of his meritorious deeds, he was blessed with a female child. The child having been as beautiful as the goddess *Lakshmi*, she was named Poompavai *. When she attained the age of *Pethumbai* †, the father was very much struck with her deportment, and he decided to bestow all his wealth on the person who would marry her.

About this time he heard of Thirugnanasambanthar's miraculous deeds at Madurai, and he rejoiced so much so that he rewarded profusely the people who carried him the news, and worshipped the

* *Poompavai* means the maiden of the flower. Lakshmi is known as *Poompavai* her seat being the lotus flower.

† A girl is known as *Pethumbai* when she attains 11 years of age.

Pilliar turning to the direction where he then remained. The millionaire then exclaimed in ecstasy, "I have given this day my daughter, my wealth and myself to Thirugnanasambanthar".

Some time after this incident, Poompavai was bitten by a snake when she went accompanied by her attendants to gather flowers in the garden adjoining her apartment. A serpent lay concealed in a jasmine bower and bit her in one of her fingers with its four fangs known as *kali*, *kalattiri*, *yaman* and *yamāthuthi*. Exuding poison into the wound inflicted, the snake played for a while with its hood spread and then disappeared. Poompavai swooned and fell down. Her attendants were alarmed and carried her in their arms to her chamber. Sivanesar got stunned and burst out crying. The relatives themselves raised a cry. Although many expert physicians and snake-charmers tried all they could to cure the poison, their endeavours were of no avail—the poison rushed up with its seven-fold vehemence. No sign of life having been found in the body, the physicians gave up all hopes, and the relations fell over the body and cried bitterly. Sivanesar revived after some time and had publication made by beat of tom-tom that he would give all his fortune to the person who would cure his daughter in three days. Experts in snake-poison and snake-charming—even those employed in the king's household,—tried their best but without success. Sivanesar however hit upon a new idea which completely dispelled his grief. "I need not be sorry at all" said he, "as I decided long ago to give my daughter to Thirugnanasambantha Pilliar". He resolved to cremate the body and to preserve the remains in the house till the arrival of the Pilliar. The body was cremated accordingly, and the ashes and bones were collected in a vessel and placed in her daughter's chamber. The vessel was placed in a cushion, dressed in silk and bedecked with jewels, water for bath, garland, sandal paste, rice, lamp and other articles that were used by the girl when she was alive were placed before the vessel every day—and the conduct of the millionaire in this respect was greatly amusing to the people.

When Sivanesar was in the habit of doing this regularly, the news was carried to him one day of the arrival of the Pilliar at Thiruvottiyur and of his stay at that place with his party. Sivanesar's joy knew no

bounds: he rewarded the people who carried the news with gold and clothes and had moving pandals erected as far as Thiruvottiyur and decorated the whole way by tying clothes, planting plantains, areca-nuts and hanging garlands and festoons. He proceeded to Thiruvottiyur with a large number of Saiva devotees and reached the place just at the time when the Pilliar was starting for Thirumailappur. Sivanesar and his company having seen at some distance the holy assemblage of Thirugnanasambanthar moving towards Thirumailappur felt exceedingly glad, and worshipped the Pilliar falling flat on the ground. Pilliar got down from his palanquin and walked towards them with clasped hands. He was told of the ways of Sivanesar by the people who went with him

On his arrival at Thirumailappur, Pilliar took to heart what had happened to Sivanesar. With a view to see his desire realized and the alien faiths of Jainism and Buddhism expelled from the land, he went to the temple of the place known by the name of Kapalichcharam, made a round of the temple and worshipped the God in his usual way. He then came out and asked Sivanesar to produce at the main gate of the temple the vessel containing his daughter's remains. Sivanesar was extremely glad when he received the order. He worshipped the Pilliar prostrating before him, and then hastened to his house. He removed the vessel, placed it in a palanquin inlaid with gems, covered the palanquin with clothes, and had it carried to the temple gate watched by female attendants. He removed the vessel from the palanquin and placed it on the ground just opposite to the sanctuary and worshipped the God. People of Thirumailappur and other places including Jains and Budddists, collected in large numbers to see what was going to happen. Celestials filled the air. Thirugnanasambanthar, who was superhuman and full of divine spirit, walked up to the temple gate, surrounded by his attendant devotees, and wanted to render a signal service that would benefit the whole world. He looked at the vessel, concentrated his mind on the grace of Siva of six transcendent attributes, and thinking in his mind that a good will will have its effect even on the bones of deceased persons, addressed as follows in his graceful words:—" O' Thou Poompavai! If it is true that the benefit one drives by taking human form is feeding those devoted to Siva and enjoying the felicity of festivals that are carried out in accordance

with the rules of Saiva *Agamas*, do Thou come before the public" and started the *Pathigam* "மட்டிட்ட புன்னை". The word "போதியோ" used in the *Pathigam* having given life to the remains, they assumed the shape of the girl's body. At the first verse the remains assumed a form and at each of the eight succeeding verses the form grew gradually into that of a fully developed girl of twelve years—the whole phenomenon taking place within the vessel itself. Thinking that the miracle would not be acknowledged by the Jains and the Buddhists, Pilliar improvised the tenth verse. Poompavai came out breaking the vessel and putting her hands out. Pilliar concluded the hymn by improvising the last verse. The large crowd that were assembled on the spot were struck with astonishment. Saiva devotees shouted out "Hara! Hara!!" continuously. Celestials and sages who witnessed this rare manifestation of grace showered forth flowers. Terrestrials with their hands joined over their heads, fell flat on the ground and exclaimed in ecstasy "Ah! Ah! The unlimited grace of God!!." Jains and others of alien faiths got stunned and staggered. Brahma of incalculable age saw with his four faces the flood of beauty that flowed from Thilottamai *; but Sambanthar who was only sixteen years of age saw with a thousand faces the flood of the grace of Siva flowing from Poompavai whom he created and who was immensely more beautiful than Thilottamai. When Sivanesar saw his daughter coming out of the vessel and standing on the ground, he fell at the feet of the Pilliar and worshipped him. Poompavai herself worshipped Lord Paramesvara and then her saintly redeemer.

Pilliar then instructed Sivanesar to take his daughter home. Sivanesar fell at the feet of the Pilliar and begged that he should marry her †. Pilliar addressed the millionaire and said, "The child that you begot died of snake poison; this child was brought to existence by me so that the grace of Siva may be made manifest to all. Your request is not therefore a proper one". Sivanesar and his relations were very much grieved and began to cry falling at the feet

* The Puranas relate the incident of Brahma creating Thilottamai at some remote period, and falling in love with her beauty having been so charming.

† It appears from the request of Sivanesar that in those days, it was unusual for Brahmins to have marriage alliances with Vaisyas.

of the Pilliar. Pilliar spoke to them kindly and explained to them the dogmas propounded in the *Vedas* and the *Agamas*. When they heard the Pilliar, they were consoled and relieved of their grief. Pilliar then got into the temple and Sivanesar took his daughter home and left her in her own compartment, resolving not to give her in marriage to any one. She attained the bliss of Siva.

Pilliar got out of the temple after worshipping the presiding Deity and remained in the place singing the praise of Siva. After some time he left Thirumailappur, taking leave of Sivanesar in soothing words and bidding farewell to the devotees of the place. Then he proceeded on visiting Thiruvanmiyur and other places and arrived at Chidamparam and remained there serving Sabanathar. Sivapatha Iruthayar and other Brahmins of Sirkali having heard of the Pilliar's arrival and stay at Chidamparam went up there. Pilliar worshipped Sabanathar along with them, and having obtained His graceful permission, left Chidamparam and arrived at Sirkali. Here he remained serving Thoniappar daily. Muruga Nayanar, Thirunilanakka Nayanar and other devotees who accompanied the Pilliar remained in the place serving the Pilliar.

HIS MARRIAGE AND ATTAINMENT OF FINAL BEATITUDE

Siva Patha Iruthayar and his kinsmen collected together one day, and after discussing the question among themselves, decided that it was time for the Pilliar to enter into marriage life. They approached him and said "Swamy, Thou shouldst now show by example the value of the *Vedic* doctrines, and must take a wife as ordained by the *Vedas*". Pilliar having declined to accede to their request, the Brahmins pressed their request and submitted with all deference, that, having taken upon himself to establish and maintain the importance of the Vedic creed, he should not decline to marry a maiden as ordained by that creed. Pilliar had therefore to yield, the object of his mission having been to promulgate the Vedic doctrines. His consent gave great pleasure to Sivapatha Iruthayar and the other Brahmins, who thanked the grace of God and wanted to select a spouse for the saint. They resolved after due deliberation that the daughter of Nambandar Nambi, a Brahmin priest of Thirunallore

was the fittest person to be wedded to Thirugnanasambanthar. They proceeded to Thirunallore with the object of proposing the marriage, and on their arrival at the place were received by Nambandar Nambi and his kinsmen. Nambi treated them with marks of great respect and inquired from them the object of their visit. The object was mentioned, and Nambi accepted the proposal with great pleasure. He addressed Sivapatha Iruthayar and said "Swamy! What great penance should I have performed to give my daughter in marriage to Thirugnanasambanthar who is the fruit of your great penance and who was fed with the milk of *Sivagnanam* by our Divine Mother *Umathevi*? Not only I, but the whole of my clan will be saved". Sivapatha Iruthayar and his kinsmen returned to Sirkali with great satisfaction and informed the Pilliar of the result of their mission. They had an auspicious day fixed by astrologers for the celebration of the marriage and made the necessary preparations for the great event. Similar preparations were made by Nambandar Nambi himself.

On the day previous to the appointed day, Pilliar had the rite of *Samavarthanam* * performed and got *Rakshai* † tied to his hand. The next morning, he performed his religious duties for the day, worshipped Toniappar in the temple, and proceeded to Thirunallore mounted on his palanquin of pearls in great splendour, amidst a large assembly of people who had come for the marriage. The procession was grand and gorgeous:—The umbrella of pearls was shading the palanquin, various decorations such as umbrellas, fans etc. etc. to which the Pilliar was entitled by his birth, adorned either side of the procession, and musical drums and pipes played vigorously along the whole way. Pilliar was met on the way by a large number of people from Thirunallore with whom he went to the temple known as Thirupperumanam, worshipped the Deity, and improvised hymns in His praise. He left the temple after worship and took up his residence in a *madam* as requested by the Brahmins. The Brahmins bathed the Pilliar in scented water, dressed him in silk and decked him with valuable jewels. Pilliar took with his own hands the sacred string of *Rudraksha* ‡ the emblem of grace that emanated from the eyes of

* The first rite that is performed when one enters the life of householder
† A Talisman worn on the right wrist as a means of protection from evils
‡ Seeds of a tree that germinated at one time from the water of grace that flowed from the eyes of Rudra, (*Elacocarpus ganchus.*)

iva, and put it round his neck with reverence and devotion. He ronounced the mys ic *Panchadchara* and rubbed over his body the acred ashes that adds beauty to beauty. He then put on his [illegible]dal arment and stepped out into the road that was elegantly decorated, worshipped Siva, and got into his palanquin when musical instruments f vario[illegible] playing, celestials showered forth flowers of the *alpaga* tree and the Brahmins chanted vedic hymns. Pilliar proceeded nde[illegible] the canopy of pearls, the musical pipes inlaid with pearls ha[illegible]ng his hallowed name. When he reached the wedding *pandal* [illegible] of flowers, he got down from his *Palanquin*, walked over the arpet spread on the floor and strewed with flowers and gold dust, and ntered the wedding hall and he took his seat which was studded with gems. Nambandar Nambi came forward followed by his wife who carried in her hands, vessels of milk and fresh water. Identifying the Pilliar in their mind with Lord Siva *, Nambi washed his feet, water having been poured by his wife. He sprinkled the water used in washing the Pilliar's sacred feet over his head and then swallowed a few drops of it and sprinkled it over his friends and relations. He then poured water into the hands of the bridegroom, mentioned his *gothra* and announced solemnly, "I have this day given my daughter to Thirugnanasambantha Murti Nayanar" The auspicious moment having come, the bride was led into the hall and was seated on the right side of the Pilliar. Tirunilanakkanayagar † officiated as priest and performed the Vedic rites necessary for the solemnization with his mind fixed on the feet of Siva. Thirugnanasambanda Murti Nayanar tied the *Mangalya sutra* ‡ round the neck of the bride, received her hands, placed parched *corns* in the *homa* fire and was to go round the fire. The thought struck him then that fire was the emblem of Siva and he therefore desired to go to the temple of Thirupperumanam. He made a round of the fire, that was kindled with vedic rites, and the burden of his new life having weighed heavily in his mind, he resolved to approach the feet of Siva with his spouse. He went with her to the temple accom[illegible]ied by, the people who were then present, and graciously, bent upon

* [illegible] oom and the bride have to be imagined Paramesvara and [illegible] is performed.

[illegible] ling ornament attached to it.

releasing all these people from their bondage, he addressed Lord Si[va] and said "My Lord! God of Nallur Perumanam !!, This is the time to approach thy sacred feet," and started the *Pathigam*, "கல்லூர்ப் பெருமணம்". Siva, the Grand repository of Grace, appeared before the saint in the form of an Effulgent Light, covering the whole temple with a gate-way in it, and said to the Pilliar, "Yourself, your wife and all that attended your marriage do get into [illegible] and come unto me." Thirugnanasambantha [illegible] Nayanar who was full of the Grace of God, worshipped the Grand Light that appeared before him, and in order to instruct the world at large the means of getting into this Light, started the mystic *Panchadcharappathigam* "[illegible]கிக் கசிந்து கண்ணீர் மல்கி" which set out in unmistakeable terms that the real path to salvation is the mystic *Panchadchara*. He then addressed the people and said "All of you who had come to this marriage, do get into this Grand Light and be saved from the trammels of future births." Those people who had all the time been immersed in the sea of births and lay therein quite stupefied, not knowing how to get out of it, entered into the Light, because they had the privilege of witnessing the Pilliar's sacred marriage. Thirunilanakka[r] Nayanar, Muruka Nayanar, Siva Patha Iruthayar, Nambandar Nambi, Thirunilakantapperumpana Nayanar and other devotees who were present on the occasion entered into the *Jyoti* with their wives and relations. The servants of the Pilliar who were in the service of carrying his palanquin, and other works and all his attendants got into the *Jyoti* worshipping it with true love. After all the people therein assembled — people of the different denominations of the *Vedic* creed and those of the Saivite creed such as Saivas, Pasupathas, Mahavirathas, Kalamukars, Vamas etc., etc., have all got in, Thirugnanasambantha Murti Nayanar the great Preceptor of Saivasiddhanta, who incarnated to save the whole world took his wife's hands, came round the *Jyoti* and got into it and got absorbed into eternal bliss and obtained *Sayujjya*. As soon as he got in, the Light disappeared and the temple was in view as before. Those that were not gifted to enjoy the privilege were very much grieved. Celestials such as Brahma and Vishnu, and the sages who saw from a distance the Pilliar get into the *Jyoti*, and were yet unable to approach it, prai[sed the] grace of God Siva and were relieved of their sorrows and [illegible]

Thiruchchittampalam.